Re-Reading Education Policies
A Handbook Studying the Policy Agenda of the 21st Century

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This book collects studies with a ‘critical education policy orientation’, and presents itself as a handbook of matters of public concern. The term ‘critical’ does not refer to the adoption of a particular theoretical framework or methodology, but rather it refers to a very specific ethos or way of relating to the present and the belief that the future should not be the repetition of the past. This implies a concern about what is happening in our societies today and what could or should be happening in the future. As a consequence, the contributors to the book rely on a general notion of public policy that takes on board processes, practices, and discourses at a variety of levels, in diverse governmental and non-governmental contexts, and considers the relation of policy to power, to politics and to social regulation. Following the detailed introduction that aims at picturing the landscape of studies with a ‘critical education policy orientation’, the book presents re-readings of six policy challenges; globalization, knowledge society, lifelong learning, equality/democracy/social inclusion, accountability/control/efficiency and teacher professionalism. It seeks to contextualise these in relation to issues of current global concern at the start of the 21st century. Despite the diversity of approaches, this collection of critical education policy studies shares a concern with what could be called ‘the public, and its education,’ and represents a snapshot of education policy research at a particular time.
Re-Reading Education Policies
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Re-Reading Education Policies

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**HANDBOOK ON MATTERS OF PUBLIC CONCERN**  
**INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW**  
*Maarten Simons, Mark Olssen & Michael A. Peters*  
*p. vii*

**INTRODUCTION**  
**RE-READING EDUCATION POLICIES**  
**PART 1: THE CRITICAL EDUCATION POLICY ORIENTATION**  
*Maarten Simons, Mark Olssen & Michael A. Peters*  
*p. 1*

**PART 2: CHALLENGES, HORIZONS, APPROACHES, TOOLS, STYLES**  
*Maarten Simons, Mark Olssen & Michael A. Peters*  
*p. 36*

**GLOBALISATION**  
**GLOBAL SOLUTIONS FOR GLOBAL POVERTY?**  
*The World Bank Education Policy and the Anti-Poverty Agenda*  
*Xavier Bonal & Aina Tarabini*  
*p. 96*

**GLOBALISATION AND THE QUEST FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE IN AFRICAN EDUCATION**  
*Leon Tikly*  
*p. 112*

**GLOBALIZATION AND NEOLIBERALISM:**  
**THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF RADICAL PEDAGOGY**  
*Carlos Alberto Torres & Richard Van Heertum*  
*p. 143*

**WHEN SOCIALISM MEETS GLOBAL CAPITALISM:**  
**CHALLENGES FOR PRIVATISING AND MARKETISING EDUCATION IN CHINA AND VIETNAM**  
*Ka Ho Mok*  
*p. 163*

**GLOBALISATION:**  
**RE-READING ITS IMPACT ON THE NATION-STATE,**  
**THE UNIVERSITY AND EDUCATIONAL POLICIES IN EUROPE**  
*Marek Kwiek*  
*p. 184*

**RESCALING AND RECONSTITUTING EDUCATION POLICY:**  
**THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND THE SCALAR POLITICS OF GLOBAL FIELDS**  
*Bob Lingard & Shaun Rawolle*  
*p. 205*

**KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY**  
**SOCIETY, KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION**  
*Heinz Sünker*  
*p. 220*

**‘PRODUCING’ THE GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY:**  
**THE WORLD BANK, THE KNOWLEDGE ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY AND EDUCATION**  
*Susan L. Robertson*  
*p. 235*

**KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY:**  
**POLICY DISCOURSE AND CULTURAL RESOURCE**  
*Terri Seddon*  
*p. 257*
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY, SCHOLARLY WORK AND THE GIFT ECONOMY: RIVAL AND NON-RIVAL GOODS**  
Johannah Fahey, Jane Kenway & Elizabeth Bullen  
[277](#)

**KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY AND SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATION: EMERGING PARADIGMS OF ‘OPEN KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION’ AND ‘OPEN EDUCATION’**  
Michael A. Peters  
[293](#)

‘MANAGING’ ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN UNIVERSITIES OR CAT-HERDING FOR BEGINNERS: UNINTENDED INSTITUTIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF RECENT RESEARCH POLICY IN THE UK  
Rosemary Deem  
[319](#)

**LIFELONG LEARNING**

LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE LEARNING SOCIETY: CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON POLICY  
Kenneth Wain  
[337](#)

FABRICATING THE LIFELONG LEARNER IN AN AGE OF NEOLIBERALISM  
Andreas Fejes  
[355](#)

CONSTRUCTING EUROPE THROUGH CONSTRUCTING A EUROPEAN EDUCATION SPACE  
Roger Dale  
[369](#)

A POLITICS OF SPIN: LIFELONG LEARNING POLICY AS PERSUASION?  
Katherine Nicoll  
[387](#)

TANTALUS’ TORMENT: NOTES ON THE REGIME OF LIFELONG LEARNING  
Ludwig Pongratz  
[404](#)

RE-WRITING EDUCATION POLICY: SCRIBBLING IN THE MARGINS OF LIFELONG LEARNING  
Richard Edwards  
[418](#)

**EQUALITY, SOCIAL INCLUSION AND DEMOCRACY**

NEOLIBERALISM, EDUCATION, AND THE RISE OF A GLOBAL COMMON GOOD  
Mark Olssen  
[433](#)

BEYOND THE CORPORATE TAKEOVER OF HIGHER EDUCATION: RETHINKING EDUCATIONAL THEORY, PEDAGOGY, AND POLICY  
Henry A. Giroux  
[458](#)

NEW POSITIVE DISCRIMINATION POLICIES IN BASIC AND HIGHER EDUCATION: FROM THE QUEST FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE TO OPTIMAL MOBILISATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
Agnes van Zanten  
[478](#)

HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY DISCOURSE(S) IN SOUTH AFRICA: PROCEDURAL OR SUBSTANTIVE DEMOCRACY?  
Yusef Waghid  
[495](#)

IDENTITY, DIVERSITY AND EQUALITY IN EDUCATION: MAPPING THE NORMATIVE TERRAIN  
Alan Cribb & Sharon Gewirtz  
[515](#)

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION AS DOUBLE GESTURES IN POLICY AND EDUCATION SCIENCES  
Thomas S. Popkewitz  
[531](#)
TABLE OF CONTENTS

QUALITY, ACCOUNTABILITY, CONTROL

"You don’t fatten the pig by weighting it": CONTRADICTORY TENSIONS IN THE 'POLICY PANDEMIC' OF ACCOUNTABILITY INFECTING EDUCATION. 549
Lesley Vidovich

FIGURES IN THE (LAND)SCAPE: HYBRIDITY AND TRANSFORMATION IN EDUCATION GOVERNANCE IN ENGLAND 568
Martin Lawn & Sotiria Grek

UNIVERSITY RANKINGS, GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL ORDER: MANAGING THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION ACCORDING TO THE LOGIC OF THE PERFORMATIVE PRESENT-AS-FUTURE 584
Simon Marginson

SUCCESSFUL SUBJECTIVITIES? THE SUCCESSIFICATION OF CLASS, ETHNIC AND GENDER POSITIONS 605
Simon Bradford & Valerie Hey

PRODUCING DIFFERENCE: NEOLIBERALISM, NEOCONSERVATISM AND THE POLITICS OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM 625
Michael W. Apple

EDUCATION BETWEEN ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY 650
Gert Biesta

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

EDUCATION REFORM, TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM AND THE END OF AUTHENTICITY 667
Stephen J. Ball

CRITICAL PROFESSIONAL OR BRANDED TECHNICIAN? CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF THE EDUCATION WORKER 683
Mike Bottery

MACROPOLITICS CAUGHT UP IN MICROPOLITICS: THE CASE OF THE POLICY ON QUALITY CONTROL IN FLANDERS (BELGIUM) 701
Geert Kelchtermans

RE-READING THE STANDARDS AGENDA: AN AUSTRALIAN CASE STUDY 722
James G. Ladwig & Jennifer M. Gore

TEACHER PROFESSIONALIZATION AS A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD: REGULATION/EMPOWERMENT IN U.S. EDUCATIONAL POLICIES 735
Lynn Fendler

THE POLITICS OF PROFESSIONALISING TALK ON TEACHING: BOUNDARY WORK AND RECONFIGURATIONS OF TEACHING AND TEACHERS 754
Rita Foss Lindblad & Sverker Lindblad

AUTHOR INFORMATION 774

NAME INDEX 785

SUBJECT INDEX 799
Critique as ethos

This book is a collection of papers that study and discuss current education policy challenges from a variety of perspectives. Although the term is clearly too broad, these papers are part of the field of study that is commonly referred to as ‘critical education policy studies’. Perhaps today the term critical has become devoid of meaning – and there are probably no researchers who wouldn’t call themselves, or their research, critical. Notwithstanding this “trivialisation”, we do want to maintain the term critical here (Masschelein, 2004). However, critical does not refer to how the researcher of education policy relates to her research (methodology, data, results, peers…). Indeed, in that sense, all research is expected to be critical. Neither is the term used here to characterise the kind of analytical framework that informs the research usually thought of as critical social or political theory.

In our vernacular critical first of all indicates a particular engagement with, or relation to, the domain that is being studied. What we have in mind is a critical attitude or ethos, and thus a way of relating to the present. The contributions in this collection articulate that such a critical research ethos can take different forms. Approaches would vary from bringing attention to aspects of policy that are often taken for granted, to contributing to the formulation of new policy agendas. Of course, to think of critique as the adoption of an ethos is not to say that such an ethos will have no implications for the kinds of framework or methodology that are used. However, there is more at stake for scholars than the theoretical or analytical framework that they adopt. Their work seems to articulate a form of public concern. We will flesh out this particular critical perspective by introducing the concept ‘re-reading’.

Re-readings

As the title of the handbook indicates, what these papers share, despite the variety of approaches and methodologies, is a critical attitude that could be equated with the term re-reading. The concept of re-reading refers to the following issues:

– re-reading suggests the importance of taking as a point of departure current challenges: problems for governments, proposed policy solutions, power mechanisms or emerging practices and tensions (for example, how do policy makers, political parties, organisations ‘read’ the problems and challenges they
want to address, what kind of discourses emerge, and which measures and instruments are proposed or implemented?);

– re-reading not only focuses on policy texts, but adopts a broad perspective that includes readings of policy instruments, procedures and strategies. Re-reading also involves recognition of the subtle and contingent mechanisms of power and knowledge production;

– re-reading contemporary readings of policy is a critical activity that aims to de-familiarise the current ways in which policies pose problems, offer and implement solutions and justify agendas. It draws attention to the ways in which power is exercised in both society and education and focuses on how problems are defined in these areas;

– the critical potential of re-reading takes on board a variety of approaches. Such approaches include attempts to reveal underlying forms of rationality, identify unspoken interests, focus on unintended consequences, point out contradictions, or map the field of contingencies;

– motivated by a concern for ideas pertaining to the role of education in society, re-reading brings new attention to issues bound up with policy, politics and power. We use the expression ‘the public, and its education’ to outline the field that incorporates such critical commitment (the reasons for adopting this expression will become clear).

If one assumes that the policy agenda represent a politics of reading, these papers aim at a re-reading of the politics of reading. Taking the policy agenda as a point of departure does not mean, however, that we adopt a limited notion of education policy, for policies must not only be seen as relating to the formal agenda of state governments. At a theoretical and analytical level, this handbook adopts a rather general notion of policy that takes on board processes, practises, and discourses at a variety of levels, in diverse governmental and non-governmental contexts, and considers policy’s relation to power, politics and social regulation. Thus from this point onward, the term education policy will be used as a general term to address topics of power, politics, government, and policies (in a strict sense) surrounding education.

From a handbook on matters of fact...

In contrast to regular handbooks, the contributions are not ordered according to the theoretical approach adopted, the part or stage of the policy process focused on, or the methodological issues discussed. The contributions are written and ordered in view of a selection of policy challenges: globalisation, knowledge society/economy, lifelong learning, equality/democracy/inclusion, accountability/control/efficiency and teacher professionalism. We treat the six challenges selected, although this does not exhaust the field of possible considerations, as constitutive of the policy agenda. For each challenge we attempt to include a diverse range of critical approaches. At the end of this introduction, a general overview of these challenges
is presented. Here, we focus first on the consequences of a form of ordering based on challenges.

Rather than discussing theories and methodologies in detail, the papers that are included report the results of critical education policy analyses. The aim of the handbook is to show, and hence to illustrate, what critical education policy analysis is about by presenting actual re-readings. In order to further this goal, the contributors to this handbook have been explicitly asked to limit theoretical and methodological discussions in their papers in favour of presenting, in as much detail as possible, their re-readings of policy readings. For those who are interested in exploring the topics addressed in more detail, and the theoretical and methodological background, a short list of further readings is included in each paper. Additionally, the introduction (Part 1 and 2) discusses some of the theoretical and methodological approaches that are adopted.

Our preliminary remarks about this book’s intended scope may have already indicated that this is not a regular handbook, although it is also not a reader that collects state of the art research in a particular domain of study. Perhaps a few words of clarification are needed, because these topics are not just about terms and definitions, but relate closely to the scope of the handbook.

Academic handbooks are commonly conceived of as reference works that offer easy access to a particular topic, discipline or field of practice/study. In that sense, scientific or scholarly handbooks aim at offering useful state-of-the-art information in order to orient readers in their role as students or (future) scholars in a particular domain. In this respect, handbooks have a clear educational function. They aim at passing on knowledge of issues related to the main concepts, theories, approaches, methods, and current and future challenges so as to enable people to gain access to the domain or discipline, and to become well informed participants. In view of this aim, the information collected in many academic handbooks presents both factual and procedural knowledge, that is, research results upon which the field of study at a particular moment agrees, and mainly methodological knowledge about how to approach a factual reality that constitutes the field of study.

An early example of such handbooks is perhaps Immanuel Kant’s critical work on (theoretical, practical, aesthetic) *Reason* at the end of the eighteenth century. In his search for the universal conditions under which the use of reason is legitimate, and grounding human autonomy beyond tradition and religion, Kant’s critical work actually functions as a kind of meta-handbook. This work includes the guidelines or limits determining for mankind what can be known, what must be done and what may be hoped for – and thus also indicates the limits beyond which people are lost in respect to knowledge, morality and aesthetics. Handbooks in this enlightenment tradition, one could say, function as a type of ‘entrance gate’ to a discipline or field of study. And, at the same time, through the vehicle of a handbook the field of study strengthens its disciplinary borders, and in some cases, is able to constitute itself as a ‘mature’ discipline. Indeed, there is a politics involved in handbooks for they constitute what knowledge in a particular field is, who the main representatives are, and how one should look at the discipline’s past and future. In short, ‘knowledge oriented handbooks’ play a clear role in the
demarcation, internal organisation, external proliferation and teaching of
disciplines. Additionally, due to this bundling of roles, handbooks are instruments
of what could be called disciplinary mechanisms, professionalisation, scientific
socialisation, or the politics of academic knowledge.

... to a handbook on matters of concern

This is, however, not what we have in mind with this handbook. As mentioned
earlier, this book does not aim to provide access to a discipline or field of study.
Instead, current policy challenges orient the structure and content of the book. Re-
reading as an ethos or attitude first of all implies a particular relation of the
researcher towards her present and her society. The point of departure is a
particular involvement with the present, and with what is going on in the present
of which the researcher is herself a part. Loosely adopting the terminology of Latour
(2004a), which we will discuss in more detail throughout the introduction of this
book (Part 1 & 2), we see the contributors as involved with matters of concern. They
are not just talking and writing about matters of fact. The distinction between concern
and fact is not however a new version of the theoretical distinction between value
and fact.

Matters of concern are things that create a public, not in view of finding
agreement (on facts or values), but by gathering people for whom something is at
stake. In this way, the book hopes to “make things public”, that is, to help to
constitute “matters of public concern” by transforming what policies or researchers
regard as matters of fact into “an issue to talk about” (Latour & Sanchez-Criado,
2007, p. 368). There is a clear echo here of the opening sentence of Dewey’s The
Public and Its Problems (1927/1954, p. 3): “If one wishes to realise the distance
which may lie between ‘facts’ and the meaning of ‘facts’, let one go to the field of
social discussion.” It is Dewey (1927/1954, 15-16) who suggests connecting the
public with the notion of fact when he defines the public as follows: “The public
consists of all those who are affected by the indirect consequences of transactions,
to such an extent that it is deemed necessary to have those consequences
systematically cared for,” and he adds, “The essence of the consequences which
 call a public into being is the fact that they expand beyond those directly engaged
in producing them” (ibid., 15-16). Thus, people are transformed into a public when
confronted with issues that are not being taken care of by the private or official
institutions and experts in a given society. Whereas matters of fact and problems
are always already being taken care of – by the available expertise and agencies in
society – matters of concern, because no-one can claim them, can become
everyone’s concern, and therefore a public concern. These are “issues” that can
“spark a public into being” (Marres, 2005). In line with this, we think all
contributors to this book would agree that accompanying their investigations is a
commitment to what we want to call ‘the public, and its education’. The
involvement of critical scholars in these issues ensures that their work is always a
kind of “collective experiment” – it inaugurates the question about how we are
Perhaps, and we are deliberately mixing highly diverse intellectual traditions here, the notion public concern could be situated alongside the Habermasian notion of “interest”, and particularly the idea of an “emancipatory interest”, or the idea of the “orientation towards mutual understanding” (Habermas, 1971, 1982). Also, Foucault’s (2000, p. 239) notion of books and courses as “invitations” or “public gestures” could be regarded as the expression of a similar commitment. The texts collected in this book can function as public gestures and invitations, not just because these are gestures to a public of contemporaries but most importantly because integral to these gestures is the creation of public issues. To put it another way, what is at stake is perhaps a type of Foucauldian “curiosity”; a curiosity that is not in the first place knowledge-oriented, but about “care” (derived from the Latin cura in curiosity/curiosité) and concern for the present and to “live the present otherwise” (Foucault, 1980). Maybe a public gesture and concern comes close to what Derrida (2001) regards as one’s “profession of faith”, or the unconditional orientation towards justice motivating academic work in the humanities and social sciences. Or, to draw on the terminology of Rancière (2005), one could say these papers are “demonstrations of equality” or “democratic acts.” They are raising a voice with regard to the policy agenda, although that voice has no part in the current “police order” according to the present distribution of parts (Rancière, 2005). As Fairclough (2001) argues, it seems as if “the public sphere is cut off from struggles over the public sphere”, and that in view of this consideration it is important to reconsider “how we research, how and where we publish, and how we write.” The collected papers could be regarded indeed as rethinking the public role of research.

From yet another perspective, one could say that what these papers share is the attempt to ask questions in a society that, as Bauman (2000, p. 5) states after Cornelius Castoriades, “stopped questioning itself”:

Not asking certain questions is pregnant with more dangers than failing to answer the questions already on the official agenda; while asking the wrong kind of questions all too often helps to avert eyes from the truly important issues. The price of silence is paid in the hard currency of human suffering. Asking the right questions makes, after all, all the difference between fate and destination, drifting and travelling. Questioning the ostensibly unquestionable premises of our way of life is arguably the most urgent of the services we owe our fellow humans and ourselves.

Whether these papers ask the “right questions”, or merely, and often equally valuably, are “an exercise in asking and prompting the asking of questions – without the pretence that is asking the right questions (…)” (ibid., p. 5), the act of asking questions could be regarded as a public act, that is, opening up a space to think about our destination. This is perhaps at stake in the activities Bourdieu had in mind when talking about the “collective intellectual”, and “working collectively to invent collective structures for invention” in the current international context (Bourdieu, 2001/2008, p. 383; 2000/2008, p. 387).
Despite the highly diverse theoretical and analytical frameworks, the authors cited in the previous paragraphs clearly share an involvement with their present moment. It is a concern that is often only articulated in the margins of their work, and phrased in a language and with a timbre that often differs from that of their ‘main’ work. Perhaps this concern is formulated at those moments and places where their scholarly work becomes both highly personal (it is rooted in their concern with their present) and public (it is a commitment that needs to be made public).

In sum, the term critical refers first of all to a very specific ethos or way of relating to one’s present, and holding to the belief that the future should not be the repetition of the past. Hence re-reading is not just about wanting to know facts about policy and education, but foremost about being concerned with what is going on, and about developing knowledge and building theories in view of that concern. Because re-reading confronts what policies take for granted or want to achieve with us, the commitment is not merely personal but also public (and political). And we should stress again that there are evidently theoretical differences and discussions, but having disagreement with regard to matters of fact is not the same as having disagreement surrounding matters of concern.

Education and our limits

Being concern-oriented this book hopefully has an educational value. Its hope is to “make things public” (Latour, 2005), to play a role in the creation of matters of public concern, and to invite readers to share these concerns and to elaborate on them in various ways. As discussed previously, this book can indeed be used as hand-book. Again, the educational value of such a book does not reside primarily in the entrance it gives to a homogeneous and disciplinary space filled with matters of fact. Its educational meaning is hopefully first and foremost related to its transformational potential, that is, its potential to transform the reader’s ethos. Using a Foucauldian expression here, the book could be regarded as a “medium” or “equipment” to transform logos into ethos starting from present public concerns (cf. Foucault, 2001; Rabinow, 2003). In other words, we hope that the educational value of this work resides in its ability to transform someone’s assumptions about, or actions in, the world; or to transform one’s world into a heterogeneous space of matters of concern constituted by diverse voices regarding policies that act upon us today.

It is important to say something about the editorial ‘politics of selection’: the selection of challenges/chapters and the selection of contributions. First, we think that a handbook becomes more than the sum of its parts. Within the scope of our handbook, this means that we hope that the gathering of articles in this collection will create new concerns. Second, we are well aware, and whilst writing this preface we became even more aware, that the selection of both challenges and contributors is limited in many ways. This is invariably due to the editors’ limited re-reading of what is going on today and who is concerned with what is going on today. There are practical reasons for this limitation, but also reasons related to our
reading of the research literature. For instance, this collection is insufficiently ‘global’, not to say that the editorial reading was focused mainly on concerns in Western parts of the world. Also racial and gender issues lack sufficient attention. Despite what is lacking from our handbook, we hope the book nevertheless presents something of what is at stake in our world today.

In the final paragraphs of this preface, we present a short overview of the introduction chapters, an overview of the selected challenges and some important acknowledgments.

Introduction chapters part 1 & 2

In the introduction of this book, we will clarify our particular scope in more detail. Part 1 of the introduction aims at positioning contemporary critical education policy studies in a broader intellectual and social context. The emergence of the policy orientation in social and political sciences will be taken as a point of departure, in order to describe the specificity of what we want to call the ‘critical education policy orientation’. Next, some of the concerns of this research orientation will be outlined: the moral and political stance related to education and society, the broad interest in education, power, politics and policy and the articulations of critical advocacy. Part 2 of the introduction discusses some of the challenges critical policy studies have been facing in the recent past and today. In line with this overview, the second part of the introduction presents an overview of models and tools that can be used for research, as well as a short introduction to the main approaches.

Public concerns: An overview

We mentioned earlier that the papers should be regarded as being concern-oriented. Instead of introducing each of the contributions, we limit ourselves here to a short overview of the selected concerns.

Globalisation

The point of departure for the contributions of this section is the way education policy and governing bodies read the challenges of globalisation, and in the European context, the challenges related to Europeanisation. Increasingly, processes of globalisation and Europeanisation are mentioned when formulating policy objectives and/or to justify policy measures, such as: improving student and teacher mobility in order to increase global competition; further decentralisation, deregulation and privatisation in order to organise global markets in education; restructuring curricula, degrees and systems of accreditation in view of new student populations; monitoring and improving performance through international benchmarking, governance by numbers, World Bank requests; and learning from examples of good practice. Through re-reading these challenges and their solutions, the contributions critically examine and assess the assumptions, consequences or tensions pertinent to them. Some of the following issues are
stressed: the erosion of national state government and its consequences for education as a public good, the impact of World Bank policies, the contradictions emerging in the field of education due to new modes of global regulation, and the questionable assumptions concerning education in a global (market) environment.

The knowledge society
Education is regarded as playing a major role in the further development of knowledge societies and economies, and policies try to enable educational institutions to take up this role. The measures include institutional restructuring, reorganisation of curricula, the implementation of information and communication technology and changed patterns in knowledge production, the changed role of education and research in societies, and new modes to manage and assess higher education and research. The contributions in this section examine governmental reflections upon the relationship between society and education, how policy objectives are formulated and justified and what sort of solutions are proposed and implemented. They seek to promote a de-familiarisation with common policy conceptions, measures and modes of governance, based on an analysis of, for instance, the impact of an economic agenda on the aims of education and research, the challenges with regard to the position of teachers, the role of the OECD and World Bank, and challenged public-private distinctions.

Lifelong learning
National and regional governments increasingly regard one of their tasks as the promotion of, and investment in, lifelong learning, and the organisation of an adequate infrastructure that allows each and all to learn throughout their lives. These policies on lifelong learning are regarded as a necessity to support individual and collective well-being in the emerging knowledge society and economy. The contributions in this section reflect, for example, on the rhetoric on lifelong learning, tensions between personal and collective (and vocational-economic and socio-cultural) interests, the construction of the lifelong learner (in the European context), and shifts in the conception of lifelong learning.

Equality, social inclusion and democracy
Within the welfare state, education policy and social policy were closely linked, that is, from the viewpoint of social justice, education was regarded as a tool in the promotion of social equality and the democratisation of society. Due to the dominance of neoliberal strategies such as marketisation, the concern for social justice is increasingly pushed aside. When social concerns are still part of the education policy agenda, the challenges are often formulated in a new way (e.g. inclusion-exclusion, optimal mobilisation of human recourses, democratic deficit) and new measures are proposed or implemented (e.g. stimulating parental/student involvement and participation, investment in social skills and citizenship competencies, empowerment). The contributions of this section focus on the tensions between educational concerns with regard to social justice and equality, governmental interests and strategies to mobilise human capital, new conceptions
of social justice, identity and equity, and the links between educational reasoning and exclusion.

Quality, accountability, control
In past decades, the notion of ‘quality of education’ has been of major importance to justify education policies. However, it has been noticed that this concern for quality is mainly about an obsession with (financial) efficiency and effectiveness (e.g. attainment targets, standards, and the optimal performance of teachers and schools). Closely related to policies in the name of quality are policies aiming at increasing accountability (e.g. holding schools or teachers accountable for their performance, stimulating managerial and market accountability). From an educational perspective, the contributions in this section discuss the consequences of these modes of regulation, emerging contradictions (between quality and equality), the dominant rationales behind and politics related to quality assurance, accountability and control, and adoption of these new control mechanisms by teachers and schools.

Teacher professionalism
In many countries and regions the professionalisation of teachers has become an explicit policy target, and thus no longer merely the responsibility of autonomous, specialised institutions. Closely related to the challenges of quality and accountability (e.g. standards for teacher training institutions, performance appraisal in schools) and lifelong learning (e.g. sustainable employability), professional work in schools is the target of regulation and control. Hence, in terms of controlling and developing professionalism, and supported by specific teacher training discourses, governments actually change the scene of teaching and the role of teachers. The contributions in this section bring about a de-familiarisation with these policy ideas and regulations on professionalisation, and focus on issues such as de-professionalisation, reduced autonomy, managerialism, micro-politics and the political and discursive constitution of teacher professionalism.

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INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

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REFERENCES

INTRODUCTION CHAPTERS

MAARTEN SIMONS, MARK OLSSEN & MICHAEL PETERS

RE-READING EDUCATION POLICIES

PART 1: The Critical Education Policy Orientation

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this first part of two introduction chapters is to discuss features of critical studies of education policy within the broader field of policy studies. The point of departure is the so-called “policy orientation” in social research, and the emergence of policy analysis and its concern within the welfare state. The genre of critical education policy studies at the beginning of the 1980s was mainly rooted in the research tradition interested in the power, politics and social regulation in and around schools, and particularly confronting the crisis of the welfare state. Echoing the term ‘policy orientation’, we want to introduce the notion critical education policy orientation to describe the distinctive scope of these studies. In this chapter we will not present either detailed definitions of or illuminate linkages between the main concepts in research traditions. The aim instead is to offer some general overviews of approaches and discussions.

The first section of the introduction presents a short overview of the so-called policy orientation; the emergence of policy sciences, the role of policy research in the welfare state, the challenges posed to rationalist conceptions of policy making, and the emergence of a critical concern with education policy, power and politics in education. In the second section we give a classical account of the different approaches adopted in policy studies in order to describe the emergence of the critical education policy orientation in the third section. The fourth section explores this orientation in more detail by focusing on three main features: the underlying educational, social and/or moral concern, the broad conception of education policy, and the forms of critical advocacy adopted. In the concluding section of this chapter we have chosen to discuss the particular limits of policy research by exploring the challenges posed to the role of research and knowledge within democratic societies. While this first part of the introduction limits itself to the recent past of critical education policy research, Part 2 will discuss current challenges and offers an overview of some of the theoretical and analytical frameworks that are used in research.

THE POLICY ORIENTATION: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Depending on the lenses adopted, the history of research on policy is either a long history or quite a short history. One could go back to the advice given to the
princes, or even to the ancient moral and political philosophies pertaining to the organisation of city states. Or one could focus on the Polizeiwissenschaften ('police sciences') in eighteenth century Europe, the gradual emancipation of the social sciences with a strong political and state-centred interest from moral philosophies in the nineteenth century, the economic and defence related studies and calculations during the World War II, and finally the emergence and development of 'policy sciences' in the second part of the twentieth century.

Within the limited scope of this introduction we will adopt the short term perspective here, particularly attending to the policy orientation in the social sciences after World War II. This orientation referred to the social science focus on public policy both as a domain of study and as a practice in need of scientific knowledge to improve itself (cf. Wagner et al., 1991; Parsons, 1995). Despite the fact that the roots of critical studies of education policy are very diverse, it is worth mentioning this brief history of the policy orientation. In fact, an overview of the problem solving policy orientation helps to understand the different background of what could be regarded as the critical education policy orientation. In this overview we will switch between discussing the broader social and political context of the development of policy research, and the theoretical developments within policy research.

a) The policy sciences

It was the book The Policy Sciences, edited by Lerner and Lasswell in 1951, that can be regarded as programmatically setting the scene for the social sciences’ orientation to public policy in the welfare state. Especially after the devastating effects of World War II, with the expansion of communism and the economic crisis, social scientists in the West were eager to actively support the development of the western democratic state and its public policy. Lerner and Lasswell’s book thus expresses western social scientists’ commitment to improve the social and democratic basis of the state by studying issues related to such phenomena as full employment, equality, and peace, and to optimise the effectiveness of public administration and organisational structures.

It is important to stress here that the role of policy sciences was defined in close relation to a particular belief in the role of public policy. In Parson’s (1995, p. 6) words, this involves a change in “(...) the role of the state (...) to manage the ‘public’ and its problems so as to deal with those aspects of social and economic life which markets were no longer capable of solving.” The policy orientation thus assumed that the modern, democratic state and in particular its public policy, are in need of specialist knowledge to improve its functioning or to reach its goals. The particular Lasswellian policy orientation of the social sciences can be summarised in terms of five characteristics:

– they are multi-disciplinary given the nature of the complex social problems, and they should focus on the general picture instead of addressing small, ad hoc problems, and combining work from sociology, law, economics, politics...;
the policy sciences include a value orientation, and it is important to clarify the
values implied in policy and those embraced by the scientist. Furthermore, the
scientist should say clearly which solution is better than others, although the
research itself should be conducted objectively;
there is a clear focus on the context, that is, the attempt to recognise the
contextuality of the policy process, policy options and policy outcomes and
hence, using not only quantitative methods but qualitative methods as well;
the orientation has two components: “the development of a science of policy
forming and execution” and “the improving of the concrete content of the
information and the interpretations available to policy makers” (Lasswell, 1951
in Wagner et al., 1991, p. 8). The first component refers to the “analysis of the
policy process” and the second one includes the “analysis in and for the policy
process” (Parsons, 1995, p. xvi). The distinction comes close to the often used,
although scrutinised, distinction between analysis of policy and analysis for
policy (see further below);
the integration of knowledge, the organisation of teaching and the organisation
of new institutions to bring policy scientists and policy makers into contact, and
hence to actually contribute to the optimisation of public policy and consequently
to the democratisation of society.

These characteristics clearly indicate on the one hand the academic belief in the
development of social science knowledge relatively independent from particular,
ad hoc interests, and on the other hand the instrumental and political belief that
such knowledge could be utilised in the process of policy making and problem
solving in society and in state administration. Indeed, in later work, Lasswell
introduces the term “policy process”, regards problem-solving as a main focus of
public policy, and stresses that the distinctive scope of the policy scientist is that
s/he is “problem-oriented” (Lasswell, 1970 in Parsons, 1995, p. 19). The particular
focus on the ‘analysis of the policy process’ should be regarded as an alternative to
the classical political scientists’ focus on constitutions, administration, legislatures,
etc.
Except for Lasswell’s formulation of the stages in the policy process in 1956,
and related to what he later would call “the decision process”, there are the
important contributions of Herbert Simon, Charles Lindblom and David Easton
With respect to decision making, in the field of policy as well as in other fields,
Simon focused on the “bounded” character of rational decision making, especially
in organisations, taking into account both intellect and affect, through the stages of
“intelligence, design and choice.” As an alternative to the rational models of
Lasswell and Simon, Lindblom introduced the idea of “incrementalism” in relation
to the policy process. Questioning whether policy making could fit into a model, he
developed the “science of muddling through.” Lindblom stressed that decision-
making and change is often incremental, not theoretically driven, and involves trial
and error. Finally, it is important to mention the influence of Easton, who
developed a model of the “political system”, and the “intra-societal” and “extra-
societal” environment, in order to analyse the process of policy making and the outputs of policy in a broader context. This combination of the stages or cycle model and the system approach became an often used tool in the analysis of public policies (cf. Wielemans & Berkhout, 1999).2

Notwithstanding the many theoretical differences and discussions, the policy sciences seem to inscribe themselves in the enlightenment project. They aim at the re-organisation of society through policy measures taken on the basis of scientific problem-solving rationality (see also Wittrock et al., 1991, pp. 28–29; Hammersly, 1994). Although there is a clear value-orientation, such as democratic values and the prevention of coercion, the epistemological and methodological assumptions of Lasswell and his contemporaries are clearly positivistic (that is, it is possible to reveal the nature of policy and decision making based on objective, empirical data or logical reasoning) and instrumental (to engineer policy based on positive knowledge of how it should be). This is foremost the case for the component ‘analysis of and in the policy process’, often referred to as policy analysis strictu senso, and to a lesser extent to the more academic and substance oriented ‘analysis of the policy process’.3

b) Policy studies and the welfare state

Despite these programmatic statements, we should keep in mind that the policy sciences came to full development in the United States and Europe only during the 1960s and early 1970s. This development cannot be disconnected from the emergence of the “full-blown, interventionist welfare state” that follows the stage of the “late liberal state” and the “early restricted welfare state” (Wittrock et al. 1991, p. 79). Clearly, there has always been a connection between state power on the one hand and knowledge on the other hand. With the welfare state in the second part of the twentieth century an alliance between a particular kind of power and a particular kind of knowledge took shape (cf. Rose, 1999). The interventionist state relied on social planning, and indeed expected social scientists to support the general plans for social and economic change. Social scientists on their part aimed at giving their research relevance through welfare policies. In this context, “political arithmetic” emerged as a discipline. Not theoretically oriented, the discipline was mainly concerned with collecting data to support public policy, and hence inscribing itself in a social-democratic agenda of reform (Saha, 1997, p. 108; Hammersley, 1994, p. 141).

The close relation between policy and research is exemplified by the so-called ‘educational planning’, emerging at the end of the 1960s and defined by Coombs (1970, p. 14) as:

Educational planning, in its broadest generic sense, is the application of rational, systematic analysis to the process of educational development with the aim of making education more effective and efficient in responding to the needs and goals of its students and society. Seen in this light, educational planning is ideologically neutral.
Educational planning hence regards itself as a system-based and strongly economically oriented analytical approach offering the necessary information basis for social and education policy and modern administration. Claiming it is ideologically neutral, educational planning considers itself to be an indispensable calculating tool in the development of the welfare state. Also worth mentioning here is the orientation towards education policy in the context of comparative educational research, or at least the attempt to use comparison as a tool to generate adequate information for planning (see Zajda, 2005).

Although it is beyond the scope of this introduction to compare the context of the United States with the contexts in other countries (see Wittrock et al., 1991), it helps to picture the scene by mentioning some differences. It is important to keep in mind that the state in the US could rely upon a well-developed empirical and applied oriented social science base that was related to the universities. In Europe on the other hand the academic establishment and development of the social sciences, in particular those with a clear policy orientation and relevance, arose from the very start in close relation to the urgent governmental request for expertise. Nevertheless, in Europe there was actually a rather strong academically based field of study on administration and state bureaucracy. Despite the important national differences, one could say that from the 1960s onwards welfare reform and intellectual reform become clearly connected in an atmosphere of social planning. Social policy scientists and politicians seemed to share the same agenda and worked closely together (cf. John, 1998, pp. 4–5).

By the end of the 1970s however, that ‘contract’ and consensus on definitions of problems came to an end. There was at least some hesitation from scientists and scholars to having a close interaction with policy makers. The contradictions of the supported welfare reforms, and their limited impact, opened up room for scholars to take distance and in addition generated new themes and topics for policy sciences. At the same time, the neoliberal and neoconservative policies (under Reagan and Thatcher) started actively questioning the role and value of the social sciences, and in particular those closely linked to the welfare state. As a result: “In most European countries it can no longer be assured, as seemed the case in the 1960s, that the spheres of policy making and research have a common concept of the nature of societal problems and of the role of research in ameliorating them” (Wittrock et al., 1991, p. 59).

Despite the less evident relation, the social sciences increasingly became exposed to “state-directed science policies” (policies they helped to create or at least supported during the 1960s), and related initiatives such as “new policy-oriented research institutions” and “the expansion of markets for ministerial contract research” (Wagner et al., 1991, p. 11). In view of this close connection, the agenda setting and funding of much policy-oriented social research was largely in the hands of governments particularly applying the Lasswellian component ‘analysis in and for the policy process.’ Other critical social scientists, still concerned with a policy orientation, were not without influence and played a role in the (academic) margins. Here, the sociology of education, and particularly critical studies relying on Marxist and Weberian intellectual traditions, started to
play an increasing role in the critical and social analysis of education policy and politics. Additionally, with the advent of the ‘new sociology of education’, and new concepts on power and politics, the tradition of political arithmetic and quantitative, statistical policy analysis was discussed.

In relation to these critical movements, it is important to make a short reference to the elaboration of critical theory by Horkheimer in the 1930s and 1940s (and later on by Adorno, Marcuse, Habermas and others) (see Horkheimer, 1931, 1939). The intention of this theory, displaying parallels to Lasswell’s project in the US, was the development of interdisciplinary social research that would meet the criteria of genuine Enlightenment science. Its aim was to combine empirical work and philosophical reflection, yet at the same time having a clear political engagement, and playing an emancipatory role. However, there was no explicit orientation to public policy, and no project supporting state policies in changing society. Relying on a Marxist background, the social reform agenda here was not predominantly state or policy orientated, but was linked with social movements, cultural change and education, and subscribed to a universalistic, enlightenment agenda. Or, as Wittcock et al. indicate, “Horkheimer’s point of departure was an explicit rejection of pragmatic epistemology, which he argued would prove incompatible with the preservation of such integrity [the universalistic claims of knowledge inherent in the tradition of the Enlightenment]” (ibid., p. 62). During the sixties and seventies, critical social theory and political philosophy came to be focused on education policy, as part of broader social and political reform projects. It is important to mention however that policy was not often the main research focus. Policy and the problematic of ‘the state’ played a role in the broader debates on the role of education in social control and equal opportunities and/or reproduction of inequality (cf. Saha, 1997, pp. 106–107) (see further below).

This short historical overview indicates how the policy orientation originated in the United States, and that the interest for education policy was part of the broader concern of scientists and policy makers to improve the information basis for welfare states policies: “For over century and a half, Americans have translated their cultural hopes and anxieties into demands for public school reform” (Heck, 2004, p. 3). Much of the education policy analysis in the United States, however, focused on improving decision making and applying quantitative, functionalist and policy-directed approaches. From the 1960s onwards there also emerged a clear focus on the broader context of the policy process, but this research was mainly concerned with evaluation and improvement. In the field of the political sciences in the United States, it is important to mention as well the research domain of the ‘politics of education.’ Research in this domain studies “the set of interactions that influence and shape the authoritative allocation of values” focusing on the concepts government, power, conflict and policy. As a field of study relying on political science concepts and behavioralist theories it became of central importance (Scribner & Englert, 1977, pp. 22–23).

Most research on education policy in Europe was located within educational administration, public policy studies and comparative education. From the late 1970s onwards a substantial amount of critical research on education policy was
done in the field of the new sociology of education – gradually labelled as “education policy sociology” (Ozga, 1987) – as well as in other fields of social, political and educational theory (Kogan, 1975; Prunty, 1985; Dale, 1989; Troyna, 1994a/b). Additionally, in both Europe and the United States, social and historical research on curriculum and social control became gradually oriented towards the problematic of the state and state governance. However, the impetus of the critical involvement towards education policy featured not only in academic debate but also in the changed political and social context of the 1980s. Indeed, the crisis of the welfare state, and of a particular kind of welfare policy, seemed to give rise to critical studies applying itself more straightforwardly on education policy (see further below).

At this point in the overview, we will switch from a focus on the social and political context of policy research to a focus on its theoretical and conceptual context.

c) The limits of rationalist conceptions

Different perspectives have been developed from the 1970s onwards in reaction to the technicist and positivist line of policy analysis, and the rationalist conception of policy making and the policy process (Parsons, 1995, pp. 434–455). Often, these perspectives have been attempts to link up again with the broader Lasswellian program of a “science of democracy.” A short overview will clarify more precisely what is at stake.

Critical rationalists hold to a position in between that of the rational model of the policy process and that of an incrementalist viewpoint. Etzioni for instance develops the idea of an “active society” that is self-critical, where the public is involved in testing assumptions and developing knowledge and a community-based moral order. Dror holds more strongly to the rational model of policy making, however he includes “extra-rational” elements in his model in order to promote understanding of policy making and public policy decision making.

The political rationalists, including researchers such as Lindblom and Hogwood, criticise the position of rationalist policy analysis, and argue that policy analysis should not replace the political process but complement political argumentation and discussion:

The quality of public policy depends on a vast network of thought and interaction, in which professional policy analysts play a small role. (…) In principle, those who analyse public policy can help to challenge aspects of the policy-making process that obstructs wise policy making, can help to broaden the range of changes under consideration, and can help to deepen political debates about problems, opportunities, and policy options (Lindblom & Woodhouse, 1993, p. 137 in Parsons, 1995, p. 438).

According to Parsons, the forensics developed a third kind of critical reaction towards the rational model of the policy process. For them, policy analysis is more similar to “legal investigation” than about using rational, scientific techniques to
find the truth. For example, policy analysis is concerned with “telling stories” (Rein), and what is important in this viewpoint is the persuasiveness of arguments. Others argue that policy analysis should be regarded as a kind of jurisprudential analysis (Dunn), and claim that it is rational to the extent that it is possible to develop a framework and rules to test arguments and make choices. What these approaches have in common is that positivistic assumptions are left behind and the adoption of post-positivistic, interpretative approaches is preferred (cf. Fischer, 1998; DeLeon, 1997; see also Taylor et al., 1997, p. 38).

Also, **managerialists** criticise the overly rational model of the policy process and policy making. They do so by introducing new analytical techniques from the business sector. By the 1990s, the management orientation has become dominant and in its form as New Public Management it has overtaken to a large degree public policy (Pollitt, 1990). In view of that development, policy analysis has become integrated as a technique within the general framework of public sector management, and supporting or replacing political decision making. Current versions of evidence-based policy are closely linked up with this management orientation (see further below). Similar to rationalist views on policy making, one of the major opponents of the managerial point of view is politics in public policy and decision-making:

What managerialism shares with the rationalist mentality is a belief that ‘politics’ is not an effective mode of decision-making. Managerialism (especially when allied to ‘public choice’ theory) in this sense represents an on-going search to take decision-making out of the world where there are conflicts over values and beliefs into a realm where decisions can be made in a more rational (non-political) way (Parsons, 1995, p. 454, italics in original).

Finally, **critical theorists** refer to a group of scholars (Forester, Considine, Fischer, Dryzeck among others) who support the idea that policy analysis should be driven by a strong commitment to social change and equality. The basic premise is that decision making should be an open process, where knowledge and claims are open to critique and promote empowerment of citizens. In line with some of the ideas of Lasswell on democracy as well as with critical theory, and in particular the work of Habermas on communicative action, scholars announce the “argumentative turn in policy analysis” (Fischer & Forester, 1993; see also the forensics). Furthermore, the importance of argument and the focus on assumption is linked to a commitment to openness, critique and emancipation.

Dryzeck for instance stresses in line with Habermas the importance of communicative rationality as an alternative for instrumental rationality. Rational policy analysis, according to Dryzeck, is a particular kind of instrumental rationality. He disagrees however with the two common alternatives of the rational and instrumental model: political rationality (and the incrementalist position) and market rationality (and the managerial position). Instead, he proposes a communicative rationality where “the only remaining authority is that of a good argument” in an open discussion on an equal basis, and where instrumental, strategic or power-related and economic interests play no decisive role (Dryzek,
1990, p. 15). According to Dryzek, the insistence on the public character of decision-making, open debate and democratic values is close to the original inspiration of Lasswell and his idea of a policy science that is actually a science of democracy.

\textit{d) The problematic of education policy, politics and power}

Based on the previous historical sketch and the listing of approaches, we have some grounds to start describing the problematic within which the critical interest for education policy emerged. The problematic will be outlined along four dimensions: the focus on the policy context and critical advocacy, the reliance on sociology of education and political theory, the concern for education and public policy, and the critical stance towards knowledge-policy alliances.

Firstly, the distinction between the ‘analysis of the policy process’ and the ‘analysis for and in the policy processes’ can be regarded as a first general attempt to bring some order in the studies of public policy: the understanding of policy, policy making and its content and related institutions and procedures on the one hand, and the concern for improving policies, decision making and problem-solving on the other hand. The research that can be placed under the general banner of critical education policy studies shares the first concern. However, in line with the critical theorists discussed earlier, there is also a commitment to actually influence education policymaking, focusing on both democratic procedures and content. But contrary to rationalist approaches, most critical studies do not embrace the problem-solving attitude and refuse to rely on how policies frame problems (cf. Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005). Furthermore, these studies do not share a rigid positivist and instrumental distinction between on the one hand policy analysis/studies (focusing on means and optimal allocation with a neutral stance towards aims or goals) and on the other hand policy advocacy (where the focus is on the sphere of values and goals) (Prunty, 1985; Taylor et al., 1997, p. 18). Concerned with the moral and social role of education and accepting the political and cultural dimension of both policy means and ends, these critical studies often combine analysis and critical advocacy.

Secondly, it is important to keep in mind that education policy was and still is a domain that is not ranked highly on the research agenda of political scientists. This is described by Raab (1994, pp. 19–20) as follows:

\begin{quote}
It is possible that a certain academic disdain has left research on education, and perhaps particularly on schooling, mainly to the ‘mere’ teachers and their educators who were steeped in its practice, placing it out of contention as a ‘serious’ political science. Although education is now an issue area of the first rank on governmental and party agendas, and in public debate, it remains the case that few political scientists with an inclination to policy studies have it clearly in their sights.
\end{quote}

This remains to a large extent a common attitude in the second part of the 1990s as well as the beginning of the twenty-first century. The central role attributed to
education in the ‘knowledge society and economy’, and the transformation of education policy and governance in a global context, increasingly seems to open up education policy for political scientists. Nevertheless, when we refer to critical studies in education policy we are mainly speaking about the research that is rooted in the new sociology of education or critical political theory tradition, as well as the research of educationalists with a policy inclination. This specific background adds a particular dimension to education policy studies as we will describe below.

Thirdly, and in line with the previous remark, there is a particular interest among researchers in the field to consider education policy as part of public policy, or even the other way around; because of the interest in ‘education and the public’ they orient their research towards politics and policy. In the context of education the term public can of course have different meanings; referring to the sector or domain, the source of funding, the mode of access, the type of control, the nature of the problems of policy, the aim of education, and so on. Clearly, what is assumed in all these welfare definitions of ‘public’ is that education is a justified domain for policy intervention. Additionally, it is assumed that changing policy is the way to reform education and to change society accordingly. The close relation between academic and political agendas in the 1960s is a clear example of this assumption. But the tension between these agendas in the 1980s and 1990s could also be regarded as an example. In fact, the critical orientation towards education policy was very closely linked with advocating a new, progressive policy agenda. And at this point, it is important to remember that these studies incorporated mainly “a critical and sometimes politically committed sociology”, and that “adherents ignored or rejected ‘mainstream’ political science and policy studies perspectives that were deemed positivist or wedded to powerful controlling interests” (Raab, 1994, pp. 20–21).

Fourthly, part of the emergence of critical research focusing explicitly on education policy from the 1980s was the questioning of the assumptions and strategic use of instrumental research on policies (Prunty, 1985; Young, 1999, pp. 678–679). First, and embracing some of the alternative approaches to the rational approach mentioned earlier, critical studies focus on the context of decisions and how problems are constructed or framed. Similarly, the view that planning and implementation can easily be managed based upon knowledge is scrutinised, as is the idea that deciding on the optimal solution for policy problems is a value-free activity. Second, the alliances between rational policy research on the one hand and education policy making on the other hand become themselves the object of critical studies. For example, the ‘ideologies’ of positivist, behaviourist and instrumental research have been questioned because they are used by policy makers to criticise those being governed for their irrational behaviour, or because these studies, while ignoring values, in fact support the status quo (Prunty, 1985, p. 133). Thus the relation between policy and research, and between power and knowledge, becomes itself an important focus for critical studies.

In order to contextualise the critical approaches in the study of education policy, it is helpful to switch again to the problematic of general frameworks adopted in policy studies.
GENERAL FRAMEWORKS FOR POLICY STUDIES

A useful way to grasp the diversity of policy studies is to list the analytical framework or frames of analysis that have been employed. We draw upon the classification of eight frameworks by Parsons (1995), although there are other often similar classifications (e.g. Bobrow & Dryzek, 1987; John, 1998; Heck, 2004; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003). In this overview, the focus is on policy studies in general. Critical studies of education policy are discussed afterwards.

- welfare economics
- public choice
- information processing
- social structure
- political process
- comparative politics
- management
- political philosophy

Scholars often combine several frameworks, yet it is useful to discuss the distinctive focus of each of them (Parsons, 1995, pp. 32–54).

Welfare economics, which mainly inspires analysis for and in the policy process, is rooted in the idea that markets are not always able to distribute resources efficiently, and that in view of market failures political institutions can intervene to correct social problems. Against this background, welfare economics is basically concerned with finding the most efficient way to intervene based on cost-benefit analysis. In other words, the main concern here is to generate knowledge that promotes the organisation of welfare policies in an ‘economic’ way.

Public choice theory can be regarded as a strong version of rational choice theory. Economic actors are regarded as calculating agents who are focussed on the maximisation of satisfaction/utility. Public choice theory assumes that political actors, that is politicians, civil servants as well as voters, are “rational utility maximisers” (Buchanan) who are guided by self-interest and thus do not act, as naïvely believed, on behalf of a kind of public interest. In view of this perspective, the policy process and policy making is explained in terms of rent-seeking behaviour, and in terms of actors who seek power, prestige and popularity. The resulting extension of state and welfare provision is criticised for distorting the more optimal handling of allocation through markets. Hence, what is proposed is the application of economics to political science. Thus the main concern is to judge public policy in terms of rational, that is economic, choices.

According to Bobrow and Dryzek, the analysts within the framework of information processing “share an interest in how individuals and organisations (…) arrive at judgements, make choices, deal with information, and solve problems” (Bobrow & Dryzek in Parsons, 1995, p. 35). This framework is not restricted to a single academic discipline; it uses insights from psychology, information science, artificial intelligence and organisational behaviour. The focus on the psychological component in policy-making and the “psycho-pathologies of power” by Lasswell is
an important perspective here, as well as the ideas of Herbert Simon on “bounded rationality” and the way decision making and problem solving takes place within given cognitive limits. Hence, the approaches within this framework are concerned with the analysis of the role of information in decision making, with a view to optimising policy making through optimising decision making.

The social structure framework refers to the contribution of sociological theory to policy analysis, and consequently it covers a very broad field. The field ranges from the analysis of social problems (and particularly the construction of social problems in lifecycle approaches), the analysis of power in society and organisations, and the sociology of knowledge studying the role of knowledge in institutions, politics and policy. Additionally, particularly in the United States, functionalist sociology influenced research of the policy process. The concern of this framework is to look at the social dimension of policies and policy making, and to explain and/or understand policies, their making and their effects in relation to social structures.

The political process framework collects approaches that look at the political context of policies and politics in policy and policy making. Parsons distinguishes between six approaches:

- stagist approaches: the analysis of policy as a process with different stages, from agenda to evaluation (e.g. Jones, Hogwood);
- pluralist-elitist approaches: the analysis of the distribution of power among (elite) groups and how they influence or make policy (e.g. Dahl, Lindblom, Lukes);
- neo-Marxist approaches: the analysis of ideology, hegemony, repression and contradictions in policy-making, and the link between different levels in the political/policy system (e.g. Miliband, Poulanzas, Offe);
- sub-system approaches: the analysis of policy-making at the level of networks, communities and the influence of sub-systems and their institutions (e.g. Rhodes, Atkinson & Coleman, Baumgartener & Jones, Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith);
- policy discourse approaches: the analysis of policy-making at the level of language, discourse and communication (e.g. Fischer, Forester);
- institutionalism (economic, sociological or political): analysis of the constitutional and institutional spaces and arrangements in which policy takes place, and relying on economics (e.g. transaction cost economics, agency theory), organisational sociology (Di Maggio & Powell, March & Olsen, Selznick) or political theory and historical accounts (Skocpol, Hall).

The comparative public policy framework includes different approaches to the study of public policy by comparing ‘what, why, how and with what effects’ different governments ‘do something or do not’. In these comparisons, different approaches are adopted: socio-economic approaches regard public policy as the result of economic and social factors, party government approaches study the role of party competition and partisan control, class struggle approaches focus on how
political forms of class struggle result in particular policies, neo-corporatist approaches take organised interests as points of departure in explaining differences in policy, and institutionalist approaches focus on the role of the state and social institutions.

The most pronounced impact on policy studies comes from the managerial framework. Important here is the application of managerial thought and techniques to public administration. This happened under the impetus of the financial crisis at the end of 1970s and consequently the transformation of public policy by public management interests and the adoption of techniques and procedures commonly used in the private/profit sector. The work of Drucker (1954, 1964, 1969) and the technique of Management by Objectives played a significant role here, as did the ideas of Osborne and Gaebler (1992) on “entrepreneurial government” and the revolutionary restructuring of the US public sector, called the “American Perestroika.” By the end of 1980s, there is the rise of what is called New Public Management, a general term referring to the application of techniques such as written contracts and performance agreements, short term employment contracts, new and multiple forms of accountability, client/customer orientations, and so on. Hence, this framework includes both a strong reform agenda and an analytical gaze that looks at public policy problems in terms of managerial problems related to efficiency, effectiveness, economy, objectives and clients.

Finally, public policy has been discussed in great detail and for a long time by political philosophers and social theorists. It is impossible to mention the ethical, methodological, normative and theoretical discussions in detail here; even distinguishing main approaches would be difficult. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that the empirical policy sciences typically proclaim themselves as emancipated from these speculative theories and philosophies. Nevertheless, the framework still plays an important role, and specific philosophies, theories and methodologies often inspire approaches within the frameworks mentioned earlier.

In line with Parsons (1995, pp. 41–54) we could mention Machiavelli and Bacon as the first modern theorists reflecting on the rationale and aims of the art of governing. Furthermore, it is worth mentioning the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill for they introduced an utilitarian calculus in regard to social and political frameworks, and in a way they are the predecessors of cost-benefit analysis during the twentieth century. The pragmatists Dewey and James could be mentioned as articulating conceptions of democracy and problem solving, and as clearly inspiring the Lasswellian program of the sciences of democracy. Political theorists and philosophers such as Rawls and Nozick, with their view on justice, property and the (re)distribution of good/justice, undoubtedly encouraged approaches which link policy studies to broader themes of social justice and the scope and limits of social/reform policies. Another example is Hayek, whose ideas as a (neo)liberal juridical and economic theorist on the free market and on human freedom and the limits of social planning strongly influenced current versions of public management and public choice theory, and played a role in the neoconservatism of Thatcher and Reagan. Still another inspiration is the work of social theorists such as Etzioni on communitarianism and Habermas on communicative rationality. Part of their
influence is related to stressing again the democratic dimension of public policy and its creation, and accordingly redefining the critical role of the policy analysis. Also worth mentioning is the work of so-called post-structuralist authors such as Foucault, with his conception of power-knowledge regimes, and his analysis of governmental. Giddens’ ideas on structuration and Bourdieu’s conception of discursive policy fields and different forms of capital reproduction, have been influential as well. They played a role in developing analytic tools to focus both on structure and agency in relation to policy making.

FRAMEWORKS FOR EDUCATION POLICY STUDIES

The previous overview of approaches is not exhaustive, but we think it sufficiently illustrates the broad and very diverse intellectual background of research on public policy. This classification also helps to explore the approaches adopted by studies of education policies, and particularly the critical versions herein. For this exploration, we note Floden’s (2007) distinction as a kind of meta-classification. Mainly referring to the United States context, Floden et al. identify three approaches in education policy analysis: economics, organisation theory and critical theory (cf. Fuhrman et al., 2007).

The economic approach includes the approaches listed earlier as welfare economics, public choice, perspectives within information processing theories, and some of the managerial perspectives. The main concern here is the rational analysis of the costs and benefits of education policy, as well as more general concerns with the economics of education. Organisational theory includes neo-institutional perspectives, perspectives focusing on decision making, and different perspectives on politics and conflict regarding organisation and administration, as well as the conventional and rational managerial and rational choice theories. The focus here is on the analysis and evaluation of organisational, administrative and political structures and procedures. The first two approaches are thus concerned with optimal organisation and administration on the one hand and rational/economic education policy analysis on the other hand.

The third approach mainly relies on frameworks within the social perspective approach, political process approaches and political philosophy and theory. Floden (2007) refers to this approach as critical theory in a broad sense. An important impetus here was the new sociology of education. This new sociology of education, inspired by phenomenology, western Marxism and symbolic interactionism included a shift from statistical, quantitative research methods to qualitative, ethnographic methods. Hammersly (1994, pp. 142–144) distinguishes between three strands: critical ethnography (Keddie, Willis, and later feminist and antiracist approaches), qualitative curriculum evaluation and the teacher-action research movement (Stenhouse, Hamilton, Elliot among others) and interactionist ethnography (for example the work of Woods, Hargreaves, Ball, Hammersley).

The kind of critical policy orientation that emerged within these traditions was not only concerned with public policy (and what governments do), but the broader politics of education inside and outside schools. In other words, it oriented itself
towards the politics of and within policy and the state with a view to understanding issues of power surrounding education. In line with the broadened field of study, these scholars not only petitioned policy makers and educational administrators with their research, but combined academic work, policy engineering and social criticism (Hammersley, 1994). Relying on research in school organisations and classroom interaction, and often closely related to teacher education programs, scholars started to address the work of teachers, the field of teacher education and the actors at other local levels of the education system.

In the United States context, as well as in Europe, neo-Marxist inspired forms of resistance theory (Aronowitz, Giroux) were developed and adapted from the end of the 1970s. Other important developments are critical curriculum theory (Apple), and poststructuralist inspired studies of governance through knowledge and subjectivation (Popkewitz), alongside the classic ‘politics of education’ field that was rooted in political theory and developed along the lines of micropolitical perspectives, political culture approaches and neo-institutionalism. In the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand the critical orientation towards education policy was rooted in, for example, a critical ethnography of policy trajectories and forms of exclusion through knowledge definition and teaching methods (Ball, Bowe, Whitty, Edwards, Gewirtz) and various strands of cultural Marxism and critical theory (Prunty, Ozga, Codd, Lingard). Additionally, from political theory, new versions of Marxist political theory (and state/conflict) theory have been developed in order to understand education policy and state governance (Dale), as well as state-centred comparative approaches (Green, Neave). Later on, there were several elaborations of French post-structuralist perspectives, and combinations with critical theory and Marxism (Marshall, Peters, Pongratz, Lindblad, Olssen, Usher, Edwards).

In short, these studies distance themselves from the kind of education policy analysis or policy research that was oriented towards the improvement of existing policies and administration, the evaluation of reform programs and the support or development of (public) management tools and procedures. Instead, these studies examine the development of education policy, its content and justifications, the impact of its broader social context and its relation to power and politics in schools. Their aim is to reveal contradictions, tensions, or general patterns and contingent or structural assemblages (see Marshall & Peters, 1999 for an overview).

Despite the diversity, and despite what has been referred to as a condition of “theoretical eclecticism” (Ball, 1997; Ozga, 2000; Taylor, 1997; Vidovich, 2002), what these studies share is the concern to put education policy in a broader social context or the context of social and political regulation. In fact, one could argue that the critical involvement with education policy is rooted in the older scholarly concern with education, power and with social regulation. When this kind of research, as a next step, started to focus on the overt and hidden form of power and politics related to the state and state governance, public policies came into view. Of course, during the 1960s, critical scholars had an interest in policy too, but either regarded it as an integral part of the criticised state apparatus or as a useful instrument to reform education and society. During the 1980s policy becomes itself
an object of critical studies, and was no longer only regarded as a tool for social reform or a function of the oppressive state. This clarifies the point that the critical focus on policy can not be disconnected from the focus on politics and power, and ultimately, from values and debates on the social role of education.

Broadly speaking policy refers here to matters of interest, conflict and power, or to the games played in structured arenas and the effects or power of discourses. For instance, one can ask whose values start to play a role in education policy, how values and power are related to policy knowledge and how they are symbolised, which sorts of conditions lead to the imposition of these specific values, discourses and/or ideologies, and how a value-loaded policy text is debated and used in the practice of schooling and what the political contexts of the texts might be (cf. Taylor et al. 1997, p. 21). Or, one can focus on the historically assembled cultural configurations that generate the emergence of political arenas where particular challenges are framed as policy problems and where policy solutions are accordingly being discussed (Popkewitz, 1996). In short, the concern with education policy in this line of research is part of a focus on the broader politics of education, knowledge and culture, as well as the politics and power within education.

Despite the diversity between and debates among scholars with a critical education policy orientation, we do think it makes sense to speak about a kind of critical education policy orientation emerging at the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s. Yet, the term policy is then used very broadly, it includes power, politics and policies, and is related to a concern for education in society – that is, ‘the public and its education’. At one level, this is far removed from Lasswell’s policy orientation, and the problem solving focus mentioned in the beginning of the chapter. However, at another level the critical education policy orientation is perhaps still close to that program, for underlying Lasswell’s orientation towards public policy was a concern with democracy. In the next section of the chapter, we will explore the critical orientation in more detail by discussing its main features.

THE CRITICAL EDUCATION POLICY ORIENTATION

Before the 1980s scholars in the sociology of education were mainly concerned with the study of the school and classroom (drawing upon interactionist and various kinds of behaviourist, positivistic approaches) or the economy (relying on functionalist, structuralist and neo-Marxist theories) (Ball, 1994a, p. 1; Torres & Antikainen, 2003). The educational reforms during the 1980s and 1990s, and specifically the confrontation with the neoliberal and neoconservative governments in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia and New Zealand, acted as a “catalyst” for the development of a new “genre of policy studies” (Troyna, 1994a, p. 3; Trowler, 1998). As mentioned earlier, perhaps this is not only a genre of policy studies, but is also a genre within the longstanding scholarly concern with power and politics within education.

Focusing on the context and impact of the educational reforms, and relatively ignored by regular political and social scientists, educationalists and sociologists of
education hence developed from the 1980s onwards their own particular policy orientation (see Prunty, 1984, 1985). Although this orientation was not grounded in a firm disciplinary basis, there are several features characteristic of the research conducted during the 1980s and 1990s. We will discuss the following features: a) the educational, moral and social concerns underlying the policy studies, b) the broad conception of policy, including politics, the mechanisms of power and the relation with the wider social context, and c) the diverse forms of critical advocacy. For each of these features, we will give some illustrations of theoretical approaches that will clearly articulate the diversity of the field of study. Other examples of approaches are discussed in Part 2 of the introduction.

a) Educational, moral and social concerns

The first characteristic is the involvement with issues of equality in education, the public role of education, social justice and critical pedagogy. These moral and political commitments appeared to be very strong in confrontation with policies that actively and explicitly sought to re-organise schooling based on the market and on managerial principles such as freedom of school choice, privatisation and deregulation, new forms of accountability and standardised curricula. Prunty expresses these concerns clearly when he argues from a “radical humanist” and “critical theory” perspective:

(…) A critical analysis would be overtly political. The personal values and political commitment of the critical policy analyst would be anchored in the vision of a moral order in which justice, equality and individual freedom are uncompromised by the avarice of a few. The critical analyst would endorse political, social and economic arrangements where persons are never treated as a means to an end, but treated as ends in their own right (Prunty, 1985, p. 136).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s other educationalists and sociologists developed a similar point of view, adding to this general description of the critical policy orientation. The common term used to refer to these studies in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand was “education policy sociology”, defined as a sociology “rooted in the social science tradition, historically informed and draw[ing] on qualitative and illuminative techniques” (Ozga, 1987, p. 14; Ball, 1990; Bowe et al., 1992; Trowler, 1998; Whitty, 2002). The description indicates clearly that these studies broke with the classical rational and instrumental tradition in policy analysis. They aimed to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of education policy making and its impact by adopting theories and methods from critical social theory. Moreover, the definition stipulates a view of research which aims at illuminating the practice of education and education policy making. Different focuses have been developed here. A quick overview would be helpful to clarify what was and is at stake.

Troyna (1994b) for example argued that the perspective on education policy should be broadened; it should not be limited merely to sociological research but
should be regarded as part of ‘critical social research’. The latter, according to Troyna, drawing upon the work of Lee Harvey (1990) in this respect, is “guided by a commitment to go beyond the surface realities”, and moreover “aims to identify those elements which have the potential to change things” (Troyna, 1994b, p. 72). In line with this broadening of the approach, Troyna argued that antiracist and feminist perspectives should be included, to “provide genuine support (…) in the struggle against the structural oppression of discernible groups” (ibid., p. 82). The term critical thus refers to both a particular theoretical and political stance.

In a similar way, although focusing less on the political struggle, Ball (1994a) stresses that the notion critical should not be limited to the use of a single theoretical framework or method, but should first and foremost be linked with a reflexive attitude on the part of the researcher and his/her particular concern with the broader social and educational context. Additionally, Ball emphasises the importance of focusing on the effects of policy making, thus combining research on the formulation and the implementation of policy. In view of this project:

The task then, is to examine the moral order of reform and the relationship of reform to existing patterns of social inequality, bringing to bear those concepts and interpretive devices which offer the best possibilities of insight and understanding (Ball, 1994a, p. 2).

At the beginning of the 1990s several researchers stressed the importance of theory building. Additionally, they pleaded that the broader social, economic and political context of education policy making should be taken into account, and they warned against merely ad hoc research (Ozga, 1990; Dale, 1994; Ball, 1994b; see further below). However, there seems to be an agreement on the critical scope of the studies. The critical scope is clearly linked up with the specific role of education in society.

In this regard, writers like Prunty (1985, p. 136) and Taylor et al. (1997) state very clearly that as education and schooling have a particular moral dimension, and as discussions of values are always involved, the study of education policy is to a certain extent always critical (cf. Prunty, 1985; Lingard et al., 1993; Wielemans & Berkhout, 1998). It is argued that education cannot be disconnected from moral ideas about the individual and collective purposes of education, or from more abstract ideas about social justice and the cultural and political order. In a similar vein, Apple (1979) states that education is not a “neutral enterprise”, and “that by the very nature of the institution, the educator was involved, whether he or she was conscious of it or not, in a political act” (p.1), and that what is needed is a “progressive articulation of and commitment to a social order that has at its very foundation (…) the maximisation of economic, social, and educational equality” (p. 11). Clearly, there is no agreement on what education should be about, and even at first sight equivocal terms such as democracy, participation and freedom are heavily debated.

In view of this, the point of departure for a large number of studies is that social and moral assumptions on education become visible in political debates and struggles especially at the level of the policies themselves:
Clearly, then, a major task of critical policy analysis must be to investigate the ways in which key terms are used, and the extent to which particular policies and practices are consistent with our moral vision for education. In this way, critical analysis is overtly political – it is anchored in a particular vision of a moral order (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 19).

Additionally, based on this overt political scope and in agreement with Prunty, the authors argue that “policy analysis needs to concern itself with the question of how progressive change might occur and the desirability of alternative policy options” (Taylor, 1997, p. 38). In a similar way, Ball states that policy and policy choices are related to a political agenda, that such an agenda can not be disconnected from values and ideologies, hence: “policies cannot be divorced from interests, from conflict, from domination or from justice” (Ball, 1990, p. 3).

It is important to note that the scholar’s moral and political commitment to education can also take another form. Worth mentioning here is the critical orientation that is not directed in the first place towards policy (and state government) but towards education or schooling. This is the domain of critical and radical pedagogy, and related theories about the political and emancipatory role of education. Aronowitz and Giroux for example state that schools are sites of public service, promoting “critical literacy” and “cultural power” (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1994, p. 127). What is needed are “radical pedagogues” who acknowledge the “necessity of struggle in sites other than those influenced and controlled by the state” and who create “oppositional public spheres” for “transformative intellectuals – that is, intellectuals who are part of a specific class and/or movement and who serve to give it an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields” (ibid., pp. 130–131). The focus on schools as being not only a reproductive setting, but also a productive site, that is, a partly autonomous cultural institution of struggle, is linked with a reform agenda at school level (McLaren, 1989). In short, the focus here is not top-down, regarding policy reform as the main route to change society. Instead, the focus is bottom up, approaching education as the main site of change in society, including change of oppressive policies and the state apparatus.

Evidently, not all researchers within the genre of critical education policy studies define ‘critical’ in the same way, or draw the same consequences for the political, social or educational significance of their research. The section on critical advocacy will elaborate on these issues. At this point, we want to present some of the options taken regarding the concern that motivates critical research.

The concern can be articulated rather explicitly and straightforwardly. Using the words of Ozga (2000), policy research should not merely be research for policy but research into policy, and more specifically on the consequences of policy, on issues of power and politics surrounding education and on social justice, equality and individual freedom. However, a critical concern can also be more implicit, that is, part of the research process itself. Critical research can show for instance that what is taken for granted is part of a very particular configuration of power and knowledge (Popkewitz, 1991; Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998; Usher & Edwards, 1994). The term critic here does not refer to what should be done in education,
society and by policy, but tries to open up new spaces for thought and action. And additionally, Popkewitz argues:

To make the naturalness of the present as strange and contingent is a political strategy of change; to make visible the internments and enclosures of the commonsense of schooling is to make them contestable (Popkewitz, 2008, p. xv).

Despite the differences in intellectual strategies, what these studies share is that the scholarly orientation towards policy and power is embedded in a social, moral and/or educational concern. That is precisely one of the reasons why education policy is investigated in relation to power and politics, as we will elaborate in more detail in the next section.

**b) Policy, power, politics and the wider context**

A common view in policy analysis is to make a sharp distinction between politics on the one hand and policy and policy making on the other hand (cf. Prunty, 1985; Taylor et al., 1997; Lingard & Ozga, 2007; Ozga & Lingard, 2007). Politics then is regarded as a messy field of interests, conflicts and power, which is mainly concerned with discussing goals, strategic options and agendas. Policy on the other hand refers to the domain of rational decision making, as well as the efficient allocation of resources and optimal outcomes. The critical orientation in the study of policy clearly questions this distinction, and particularly the exclusion of politics from the sphere of policy. We will explore the roots and implications of the broad conception of policy in the following paragraphs by listing some examples.

Let us take the ideas of Prunty as the first example. The background of his concern, in line with the new sociology of education developed in the 1970s, is how oppression works in schools, especially through the three “message systems” identified by Bernstein (1971): “curriculum (what counts as knowledge), pedagogy (what counts as valid transmission of knowledge) and evaluation (what counts as valid realisation of knowledge)” (Prunty, 1985, p. 136). What is assumed in this type of research is that decisions on “what counts as knowledge” involves power and conflicts based on interests. Research along these lines allows the researcher to examine what happens in schools, and how this is linked with more general mechanisms of economic and social reproduction. Based on this, the focus is on the question of how administration and policies play a role in political mechanisms of power, conflict, interest and control/reproduction. Thus a rather particular critical policy orientation emerges here, clearly articulated by Prunty (1985, p. 135) as follows:

(…) It must be recognised that much of the power and control exerted by the school administrator over classroom practice issues from, and is legitimated by, educational policy. Hence, many educational structures and procedures are manifestations of policy, and much of the school’s administrator’s work has to do with ensuring that policy is followed.
The orientation towards policy is thus rooted in the concern with both macro and micro mechanisms of reproduction in education, and ideas about alternative forms of schooling. This broad conception of policy becomes much clearer when we run quickly through some of the definitions and descriptions found in the literature.

In line with Easton and Anderson, Prunty defines policy very broadly as “the authoritative allocation of values”, and he assumes that “on the bottom line, policy is the legitimation of values.” He goes on: “(...) It draws our attention to the centrality of power and control in the concept of policy, and requires us to consider not only whose values are represented in policy but also how these values have become institutionalised” (ibid., p. 136). Additionally, and in line with Dye, some scholars add that the study of policy should focus on what is done, but also on what is not being done or on non-decision making (cf. Taylor et al., 1997, p. 22). Hence, the politics of education policy also plays a role in what is not being done. In a similar way, and explicitly mentioning the political dimension of policy, Codd offers the following definition:

Policy (...) is taken to be any course of action (or inaction) relating to the selection of goals, the definition of values or the allocation of resources. Fundamentally, policy is about the exercise of political power and the language that is used to legitimate that process (Codd, 1988, p. 235).

In view of this, Rizvi (2006, p. 198) suggests not only focusing on how different policies work and on the effects of policies, but to focus as well on how the authority is developed and secured for governments to steer society, to deploy power and to develop policies.

At this point it is worth mentioning the versions of critical policy research embedded within political theory and more specifically critical theory and Marxist state theory. Dale (1989), for example, studies the “politics of education”, that is, the way the broader social, economic and cultural context gives rise to particular state politics and education policies. His concern is how the needs of the economy and social expectations are translated into a policy agenda for schools, what the role of the state is in these translations, and he develops a critical policy orientation as an answer to the limited scope of classic reproduction theories (Dale, 1994, p. 37). Dale thus suggests focusing on the ‘politics of education’ next to the more narrow field of ‘educational politics’, that is, how actors within the field determine the policy agenda.

Several other conceptions of policy are worth mentioning, including cultural political perspectives, studies on the historic assemblage of social regulation, critical theory, system theory and public regulation.

In the United States, a critical orientation towards education policy came to development from the end of the 1970s onwards. More precisely, the focus shifted to the problematic of the state and the state’s role in social regulation. In view of the perspective on power and conflict in schools, Giroux for instance suggests that schools no longer be viewed in line with Althusser’s deterministic conception as being merely part of the “Ideological State Apparatuses” (Giroux, 1981, p. 18). His culturalist approach acknowledges the relative autonomous role of culture,
interaction and knowledge production in social settings (Giroux, 1983). Additionally, in elaborating the classic sociological perspective that focused mainly on social control and reproduction, Apple focuses on the role of the state apparatus, and its relative autonomy.

Indeed, Apple observed at the beginning of the 1980s there had been no real interest in the role of the state in education except for the “predominantly liberal research on the ‘politics of education’” (Apple, 1982, p. 29; pp. 120–134). The latter refers in the United States to a sub-discipline within the political sciences which focuses on the “authoritative allocation of values” (Scribner & Englert, 1977, pp. 22–23). Critical policy studies seek to take distance from this line of research. A scholarly concern with shifts in (federal) welfare policies emerges, particularly related to the Reagan/Bush administration. This critical orientation towards the state remains embedded within the broader interest in power and hegemony in schools. As mentioned earlier, the studies are often related to critical and radical pedagogy, rooted in the work and projects of Paulo Freire (1970) in Brazil and other versions of Central and South-American emancipatory education.

Though not directly involved in these discussions, one could argue that Popkewitz’s approach in line with Foucault and Bourdieu, is another attempt to rethink and reconceptualise the problem of social regulation and consequently the problematic of the state (Foucault, 1996, p. 27; cf. 1991). In his research the relation between ‘the state’ and ‘civil society’ is not the point of departure. According to Popkewitz: “(…) These set of distinctions accept political rhetoric as the presupposition of analysis rather than making the rhetoric itself the focus of what is to be understood and explained.” And hence he formulates his purpose as “an attempt to locate the state in the problematic of regulation (Popkewitz, 1996, p. 27). The main focus, and contrary to functionalist or Marxist accounts, is to study the production of actors, images and ideas, and their assemblage as a construction of governing; “this assemblage is neither evolutionary nor structural, but historically contingent” (ibid., p. 47). Concerned with the forms of power surrounding knowledge and education, genealogical research includes a particular orientation to political and policy discourses.

A complete overview is beyond the scope of this introduction, but it is worth mentioning more European orientations towards politics and education policy. First, it is important to keep in mind the distinction between policy and politics is difficult to make in the French, German, Italian or Spanish languages. The notion ‘policy’ can not be translated, at least not in relation to ‘politics’ as is the case in English. The terms political and politics are mainly used, as well as broad conceptions of administration (cf. Parsons, 1995, pp. 13-14). With regard to education a strong social research tradition emerged in Germany focusing particularly on power and control in schools and society in parallel with the critical theory of Adorno and Habermas (Pongratz, 1989; Sünker & Krüger, 1999). Equally important in the German context are the system theoretical accounts of education (by Luhmann and others). In contrast to critical social theory, many of these theoretical accounts claim a sort of neutrality. The studies address manifestations of the logic of differentiation in society, including the consequences
for the educational and political system (cf. Oelkers, 1989; Tenorth, 1992; Hermann, 1993; Vanderstraeten, 1997). In France, in line with the early work of Bourdieu and Passeron, and the genealogical work of Foucault, there has been an interest in the politics in and around schooling and the impacts of different kinds of public regulation and public action (except for research in education administration and politique publique) (van Zanten, 2005, Boussaguet et al., 2004; and for the French speaking part of Belgium: Maroy, 2006). The early sociological work of Bourdieu and Passeron, which assumed little room for policy to change education and society, played however a major role in the educationalist and intellectual distrust towards the field of policy and policy making (van Zanten, 2004).

The previous overview sufficiently indicates that the critical policy orientation as we define it here is not restricted to the analysis of public policy, or the policy produced by government. Based on the introduction of Lingard and Ozga (2007, p. 2) to the RoutledgeFalmer Reader in Education Policy and Politics, we will end this section with a useful overall picture of the domain of study:

- Education policy, as a field, in respect to schooling at least, deals with all texts, apart from curricula, which seek to frame, constitute and change educational practices (…);
- Education policy includes all sectors of education, (…) it includes policy produced in parts of the state other than education ministries;
- The totally pedagogised society (…) demands (…) the extension and refocusing of its [policy research] gaze (…);
- (…) We also include the processes involved in the production of policy text and those involved in its practice in our definition of education policy (…);
- [We] recognise that contestation is usually involved at all stages of production and implementation, as well as in relation to the discourses which frame the actual written text;
- (...) Policy texts are usually heteroglossic in character, discursively suturing together differing interests to achieve apparent consensus and legitimacy (…);
- If we work with a broad definition of politics as practices and discourses to do with power (in its structural sense, i.e., as concentrated and congealed, as well as in its poststructural sense, i.e. as dispersed, relational and practical forms) and questions of who benefits from particular social arrangements, then education policies are evidently political.

Thus critical policy studies focus both on the “politics of education policy” and on “education policy as politics” (Lingard & Ozga, 2007, p. 3). The former refers to the broader context of power, social arrangements and discourses around education within the national and global context. Policy here is regarded as part of the broader political context and social structures. The latter focuses on how state policy involves politics (interests, conflicts, power and control) in its formulation and implementation. Here, politics is approached as part of policy.

This is close to Dale’s distinction between the ‘politics of education’ and ‘education politics.’ According to Dale, the latter can not be explained and
understood in detail without understanding “the agenda for education and the processes and structures through which it is created” (Dale, 1994, p. 35). Although Dale has clearly some of Ball’s work in mind here, Ball himself agrees with the need to find an optimal balance between both. The following description summarises precisely what is at stake:

(…) The problem always remains that by focusing on the figures which move across the policy landscape we may neglect the geomorphology of the landscape itself and changes in its terrain and substructure. On the other hand, a preoccupation with dominant modes of political rationality and global economic forces may lead to a misleading neglect of transformative activities and the possibility of surprise. It is the interplay between figure and landscape that is important theoretically and empirically (Ball, 1994a, p. 118).

c) Critical advocacy

The final characteristic of the critical education policy orientation we want to explore is its strong progressive commitment towards education and society. Prunty is clear about this: “We contend that an educational policy analysis must attend simultaneously to the workings of the school and the workings of society” (Prunty, 1985, p. 135, italics in original). Thus the analysis of education policies is at the same time a commitment to try to have an impact on education policy and to support education reforms that lead to a more equal and less coercive society (cf. Taylor et al., 1997). In its original formulation it is an attempt to criticise what was called conservative education policy, that is, policy supporting educational systems that reproduce inequality and maintain specific cultural and moral formations. What it supports is progressive education policy, that is, policies explicitly aiming at education reform in view of social equality. In other words, the analytical focus on the politics of education policy is linked to the attempt to develop counter-politics in view of a more socially just and liberating allocation of values through policy.

There are clearly different approaches regarding ‘critical advocacy.’ The continuum of Gordon et al. (1977) is a helpful point of departure to say more about these differences (cf. Codd, 1988, pp. 235–236; Parsons, 1995, pp. 55–56). In line with the Lasswellian distinction between knowledge for the policy process and knowledge about the policy process, Gordon et al. (1977) make a distinction between “analysis of policy” and “analysis for policy.” The latter refers to the kind of analysis that provides information for policy making, while the former includes the critical examination of past and existing policies.

Analysis for policy can take two different forms: ‘information for policy’ and ‘policy advocacy.’ Policy advocacy includes research that wants to influence the policy agenda, and hence to make specific policy recommendations. Information for policy is about the analysis that wants to provide information and data (on policy options for example) to assist the formulation or revision of policies.
Analysis of policy can take the form of ‘analysis of policy determination and effects’ and ‘analysis of policy content.’ The first kind of analysis is concerned with how policy is made, why, when and for whom, as well as with the effects of policies (on groups) and its impact (on a given problem and in view of social concerns). The analysis of the policy content focuses on the development of a particular policy (in relation to earlier policies) or on the values, assumptions and ideologies at stake in the policy process and content.

Many scholars however question the value of this classification. Prunty (1985) explicitly argues that critical education policy analysis is not only about an analysis of the content of policies and its effects, but underlying it is a strong concern for critical policy advocacy. As mentioned earlier, the advocacy concern is actually about the moral and social dimension of education, and the political commitment for progressive education reforms. In a similar vein, Taylor et al. (1997, pp.18–21) and Lingard and Ozga (2007, p. 6) hold to the idea that policy advocacy should be a main component of critical policy analysis. However, it is worth stressing once again that their understanding of policy advocacy is quite different from the kind of technical advocacy (strictly speaking not advocacy for it is limited to means) in rational policy analysis.

In order to be able to explore in more detail the scope of critical advocacy, we shall discuss first some assumptions of the traditional approach. Young (1999) distinguishes four characteristics of the traditional approach to education policy studies:

- Education policy studies are concerned with the process of educational changes or reforms (planning, implementation, examination, and/or evaluating); they assume reforms are deliberate processes that can be planned and managed (sequential, incremental, and/or political);
- Education policy studies assume that action is driven by goals or preferences (and actually equate this with what rationality is about);
- Education policy studies assume that knowledge for decisions and for implementation is obtainable, cumulative and communicable to others;
Education policy studies hold to the idea that policies and their results can be evaluated; that in evaluation problems can be identified and that accordingly solutions can be given.10

What is taken for granted in this approach is that education policy studies are neutral with regard to the policy option or content, and are merely supportive. Codd (1988, p. 238) discussed this approach as the “technical-empiricist model of policy analysis.” The model assumes that policy analysis is about facts on the means of policy or the nature of the policy problem while politics considers the goals of policy, the problem formulation and the implied values. In this model, there is no real form of policy advocacy (Taylor, 1997, p. 174), but there is primarily an empirically based technical support of policy making in the policy process itself (formulation, decision, execution, implementation). In such a model, the focus is on improvement in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

Most critical policy studies do not agree with this objectivistic and technical-empirical relationship to the field of policy making. In fact, in line with the broad conception of education policy, these studies lead to different forms of critical advocacy. Some aim at policy recommendation, while others want to inform readers about the effects of policies or about taken for granted arenas in social governance. Despite the differences we propose to understand them as different genres of critical advocacy.

An attempt to describe the specificity of critical advocacy at yet another level is the distinction between “policy science” and “policy scholarship” (Grace, 1984; cf. Ozga, 1994, pp.3–4, Ball, 1997, p. 264). Borrowed from Brian Fay (1975) and his influential book Social Theory and Political Practice, Grace makes this distinction:

Policy science (…) is a form of social and educational analysis which attempts to extract a social phenomenon from its relational context in order to subject it to close analysis. Following the models of natural science from which it is derived, it is relatively uninterested in the history or cultural antecedents of the phenomena under investigation. (…) Policy scholarship resists the tendency of policy science to abstracts problems from their relational settings by insisting that the problem can only be understood in the complexity of those relations. In particular, it represents a view that a social-historical approach to research can illuminate the cultural and ideological struggles in which schooling is located. (…) Whereas policy science excludes ideological and value conflicts as ‘externalities beyond its remit’ (…) (Grace, 1995, pp. 2–3).

The critical education policy orientation is clearly part of policy scholarship. The policy scholar is someone who can inform policy makers and the public, and at that level there is a possible advocacy role. However, the role of the scholar is not about clear-cut prescriptions on means or policy engineering along the assumptions of the technical-empiricist model. Ball’s refinement of the distinction between scholarship and science by adding four additional figures illustrates the differences even better (Ball, 1995, 1997; cf. Humes & Bryce, 2003, pp. 183–184).
The policy scholar is the intellectual who can inform policy making, however without providing clear prescriptions or instructions. The latter are instead regarded as a major aim of policy science, and include the component of policy engineering in particular (that is, policy advocacy understood in its technical sense). The policy engineer wants to give the most efficient and effective procedure or course of action in order to be able to come to a solution or to realise a policy aim.

The interpretative social scientist with a policy orientation (relying on case studies and ethnographic research for example) wants to point out the correct meaning of what is going on in the social world, or the correct understanding of social and education policy processes. As this kind of research often relies upon modern epistemological assumptions, its relation to the context of policy making (and education in general) remains to a large extent instrumental. Consequently, it can be argued that this research often functions as a tool in justifying existing practices.

Critical social science regards theory itself as a tool in the process of social change, and hence moves beyond the ‘conservative’ tendency within classic interpretive social science. However, as mentioned earlier, its role of advocacy is not restricted to informing governments about reform policies, but should be situated as well at the level of teachers, teacher educators and curriculum. According to Ball (1995), the figure of the ‘reflective practitioner’ (Schön) who combines professional development, classroom change and curriculum reform, could be regarded as exemplary.

A fifth figure is the policy entrepreneur, that is, someone “who is committed to the application of certain technical solutions [to] organisations and context which are taken a priori to be in need of structural and/or cultural change” (ibid., p. 265, italics in original). The entrepreneur is driven by belief and acts with a view to selling applications, including having the networking and story-telling skills for doing this. Reform applications with a goal of organising “education for citizenship” could be regarded as part of the package of the policy entrepreneur.

However, Ball seeks to define a sixth figure to describe the role and aim of policy research in current societies. We can call this the figure of the policy theorist. He or she provides answers to the epistemological challenges of post-structuralism and the current pluralist social world, and who also takes up the difficult work of intellectually-based social criticism. In contrast to the traditional rational policy science and managerial and technical policy entrepreneurship, this approach pleads for theory as a tool to “defamiliarise the present practices and categories, to make them less self-evident and necessary, and to open up spaces for intervention of new forms of experience” (Ball, 1995, p. 266). Theory is not to be understood as offering explanations for knowledge-based change, but first and foremost as a vehicle for the “cultural critic” by offering new perspectives, and opening up spaces for “edifying conversation” (ibid., p. 268).

Such a ‘post-structural’ option however, is not generally agreed on (cf. Troyna, 1994b, p. 82). Some will argue that a much more overt and committed form of informing the policy process and politics is needed. In line with Flyvbjerg (2001, p. 166) and his plea to “transform social science to an activity done in public for the public”, Humes and Bryce (2003, p. 182) suggest that policy scholarship should
“concentrate on problems that matter to local, national and global communities and this will involve focusing on issues of values and power.” This democratic form of social criticism is regarded as indispensable in preventing the isolation of the academic world, or for preventing the advocacy role of critical policy studies to become sterile, contingent or relativist (and endlessly stuck in self-critique, leading to intellectual paralysis and postponed decision making).

It is not our aim to picture this debate in detail, or to take a position. What we want to stress here is that the figure of the policy theorist remains valuable because it clarifies that, even if modernist forms of advocacy are radically questioned, underlying critical policy research is still a deep commitment to influence the social and political world. Critical policy theorists put forward neither technical advice, policy selling, agenda setting, nor social criticism, but “offer new perspectives and edifying conversations” at the level of cultural life. Yet, it is still an orientation to, and concern with ‘the public, and its education’.

A final illuminating attempt to locate the intellectual scope and the social and political role of the critical policy orientation is the distinction of Dale (1994) between the critical analysis of the ‘politics of education’ and ‘applied sociology of educational politics’ and, related to this, the distinction between ‘critical theory’ and ‘problem solving’. Although much more is at stake in this discussion, these distinctions are useful in exploring critical advocacy.

The concern of Dale, shared with several other scholars in the field (Ozga, 1994; Raab, 1994; Ball, 1994b; Popkewitz, 1984; Apple, 1979), is that “questions of short-term, practical application” risk displacing theoretical questions. This is actually the case with a large number of education policy studies which Dale refers to as “applied education politics” (Dale, 1994, p. 32). According to Dale, it is important to question the prevalence of education politics over politics of education and the related insistence on problem solving instead of critical theory. Politics of education is “the process and structures through which macro-societal expectations of education as an institution are identified and interpreted and constituted as an agenda for the education system” (ibid., p. 36). In contrast, education politics refers to “the processes whereby this agenda is translated into problems and issues for schools, and schools’ responses to those problems and issues” (ibid., p. 35). In Dale’s view, education politics can not be understood sufficiently without linking it with the politics of education. The risk is, according to him, taking the policy agenda for granted and, as a consequence, an inability to obtain any distance from the way problems and policies are framed.

According to Dale, and drawing upon the work of Robert Cox, this is connected with adopting the common problem-solving approach in contrast to a reliance on critical theory. The former “takes the world as it finds it”, “with the prevailing social and power relationships and the institutions into which they are organised, as the given framework for action” and with a view to making “these relationships and institutions work smoothly by dealing effectively with particular sources of trouble” (Cox, 1980, p. 129 in Dale, 1994, p. 39). Critical theory by contrast “stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about” and is “directed towards an appraisal of the very framework for action, or
problematic, which problem-solving accepts as its parameters (Cox, 1980, p. 129 in Dale, 1994, p. 39). Dale does not want to say that critical studies of education policy and the politics of education should not be concerned with intervening in and informing policy makers. They can even play a role in finding solutions. The point is that, relying on critical theory, the concern and focus is not to make the existing system, procedures or practices more efficient and effective by offering solutions for problems identified elsewhere. In other words, the critical policy orientation is not rooted in the concern for problem solving, but is concerned with obtaining the larger picture within which policy problems take shape.

The previous discussion between education politics and politics of education refers partly to the discussion between the approach of Dale in contrast to the approach of Ball, and to the difference in theoretical and methodological assumptions. But both seem to agree that the critical orientation to education policy is not about solving problems per se. It is foremost concerned with putting the way policies ‘read’ the world and define problems in a broader context, and hence not taking the problems for granted. Additionally, the orientation includes being sensitive to how policies themselves create the problems to which they are an answer, and acknowledging that often problems are framed with specific solutions in mind (cf. Dale, 1989, p. 35; Yeatman, 1990, 158; p. Ball, 1994b, p. 118). However, as Gale remarks, this should also apply to the work of critical analyst, and therefore: “(…) we must be careful not to simply fill predetermined theoretical buckets with policy data” (Gale, 2001, p. 384). In other words, the attempt to re-read policy agendas also includes an awareness of and critical attitude towards one’s own role as scholar in the policy and political fabric.

In sum, the distinction between problem solving and critical theory mirrors the distinction between policy science and policy scholarship, and refines the general opposition between analysis for policy and analysis of policy. Again, research with a critical policy orientation is highly diverse, combining both analysis of policy and analysis for policy (cf. Lingard & Gale, 2007, p. 18). The meaning of the term ‘for policy’ does not imply that critical studies are carried out for policy makers, based on their problem definition and in view of their goals, but that critical research is concerned with ‘change’ or ‘acting upon’ the world and existing discourses. Whether acting upon or critical advocacy take the form of overt social criticism, political commitment, informed public debate, offering perspectives or seeking to achieve educational and social reforms based on critical pedagogy depends largely on the critical ethos and the related theoretical intuition. Yet, we propose to conceive of them as different genres of critical advocacy concerned with ‘the public, and its education’.

CONCLUSION: THE CRITICAL EDUCATION POLICY ORIENTATION AND ITS LIMITS

As a conclusion to this part of the introduction we shift our attention to some specific limits of the critical policy orientation. An important aspect of the limits of policy studies is the question of the role of policy researchers in democratic
societies, and more broadly, the tension between research and democracy. The tension between both can be summarised in the typical modern conception that policy research is based on the ‘power of truth’ or ‘the facts that speak’, while democracy is about the ‘power of the people’ or ‘the opinions of people’.

In today’s societies, the authority of the researcher’s knowledge and policy advocacy is no longer taken for granted (cf. Ozga, 2000). Moreover, in line with the evidence based policy movement it seems that policy-makers themselves have become policy experts relying on facts regarding decision making and policy objectives.

Modern approaches to policy assumed a distinction between the field of democracy and the field of informed decision-making. The distinction is similar to the distinction between (‘often messy’) politics and (‘possibly rational’) policy making. Inspired by critical theory, scholars however started to focus on the relation between politics and policy making, as well as on politics as part of policy making and policy making as part of the political context. One step further, and in line with for example Habermas, Yeatman or Rancière, is to bring the link between democracy and politics/policy to the foreground. Democracy could be regarded as an un-gendered fundamental process within the process of policy and politics:

This opens policy up to the appropriate participation of all those involved all the way through points of conception, operational formulation, implementation, delivery on the ground, consumption and evaluation, rather than separating policy from politics, which has the effect of protecting and sustaining bureaucratic logics of practice from democratic possibilities (Ozga & Lingard, 2007, p. 67).

In a radical form, however, the recognition of the democratic process within policy and politics actually questions the role of ‘policy advocacy based on research’, or at least, forces policy analysts but also critical education policy scholars to re-examine the democratic value of their intellectual position and advocacy. In this context, and possibly merging ‘theory’ and ‘politics’, Yeatman introduces an extended and deliberately normative definition of the “policy activist” as someone who:

(…) champions in relatively consistent ways a value orientation and pragmatic commitment to what I have called the policy process, namely a conception of policy which opens it up to the appropriate participation of all those who are involved in policy all the way through points of conception, operational formulation, implementation, delivery on the ground, consumption and evaluation (Yeatman, 1998, p. 34).

It is beyond the scope of this introduction to discuss these challenges in detail, but we do think it is important to mention them. What has become clear today is that the authority granted to the critical policy researcher in the welfare state is being challenged. This forces us the rethink the idea of a science of democracy (Lasswell), and the implied tension between science and democracy. And rethinking this idea, we can consider a shift from welfare advocacy to democratic advocacy. Indeed, re-reading education policies in view of gathering people around
matters of concern – the focus of this handbook - could be regarded as a democratic act or an act of public advocacy. It is about gathering people around issues in education as a public, and hence turning education into a matter of public concern. This critical ethos is not in opposition to democracy, but is perhaps a way of living a democratic life, and a way to be concerned with or to be part of ‘the public and its education.’

NOTES

1 This summary is based on the work of Parsons (1995), Wagner et al. (1991), Colebatch (1998), and Howlett & Ramesh (2003), although they each use a slightly different list of characteristics.

2 Although the clear dominance of US scholars in the field, Parsons mentions the influence of scholars outside the US: Geoffrey Vickers and Yehezkel Dror (Parsons, 1995, pp. 25–26). Vickers contribution lies in his focus on the role of values and judgements (related to social cooperation) in the policy process, while Dror developed a modified form of decision-making in his critique of the rational models, and by taking distance from the incrementalist position of Lindblom.

3 The term policy analysis is sometimes used as a general term including analysis for policy and analysis of policy, while the term policy studies is used to refer to policy analysis combined with so-called program evaluation (evaluation of large scale social programs in the 1960s) (cf. Nagel, 1999).

4 Horkheimer describes the idea of critique in the following terms: “By criticism, we mean that intellectual, and eventually practical, effort which is not satisfied to accept the prevailing ideas, actions, and social conditions unthinkingly and from mere habit; effort which aims to coordinate the individual sides of social life with each other and with the general ideas and aims of the epoch, to deduce them genetically, to distinguish the appearance from the essence, to examine the foundations of things, in short, really to know them.” (Horkheimer, 1939)


6 With regard to this influence, Shaha (1997, p. 108) states: “Perhaps the most important aspect of the ‘new’ sociology of education was that it directed attention to the study, using mainly qualitative methods, of classroom interaction, classroom language, and the curriculum, the last having been a hitherto neglected field for sociological research (…). During the 1970s and 1980s the ‘new’ sociology of education stood in opposition to the ‘old’ and was manifested particularly in resistance theory and social and cultural reproduction theories.”

7 By adopting the approaches of the latter, the education of politics field has been overshadowed by the policy analysis and evaluation field (Scribner, 1977; Mitchell & Goertz, 1990; Scribner et., 2003; cf. Heck, 2004, p. 17).


9 Democracy actually starts to play a rather prominent role in critical theory (of education policy), for instance in line with the work of Yeatman, Bourdieu and Rancière (see also conclusion of this chapter). Of course, these authors question precisely the instrumental relation between ‘science’ and ‘democracy’.

10 See also Pring (2000) for a (similar) listing of features of conventional research in the physical and social sciences, and Humes and Bryce (2003) for a discussion on the assumptions on the relation between research, practice and policy.

11 The “macro-societal expectations” refer to the outcome and specification of the three core problem of the capitalist state: “the support of the accumulation process”, “the maintenance of a social context not amenable to the continuation of that accumulation process” and “the legitimation of the system” (Dale, 1994, p. 36; cf. Dale, 1989).

12 It is interesting to refer in this context to Wildavsky (1987, pp. 12–13), who states in his book Speaking truth to power: The art and craft of policy analysis: “(…) Speaking truth to power remains
the ideal of analysts who hope they have truth, but realise they have not (and, in a democracy, should not have) power. No one can do analysis without becoming aware that moral considerations are integral to the enterprise. After all, analysis is about what ought to be done, about making things better, not worse. I have never been sympathetic to the view that facts and values, except as intellectual constructs, either are or ought to be kept separate in action.”

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INTRODUCTION

Part 1 of the introduction explored the emergence of the so-called critical education policy orientation, and explored three features of this orientation: acknowledgement of the educational, moral and social concerns in debates on education, the focus on power, politics and regulation in education, and the adoption of a specific form of critical advocacy towards society and policy. This part of the introduction discusses the current state of affairs, and aims both at giving access to theoretical discussions and analytical frameworks and offering some overviews of specific and hopefully useful tools and approaches.

The first section explores some of the challenges critical education policy studies are facing today in view of the challenges of contemporary society and regarding theory and methodology. We will clarify that in confrontation with these challenges the critical orientation is in need of “de-parochialisation” (Dale, 1994; Lingard, 2006) and a “recalibration of critical lenses” (Robertson & Dale, 2008). The second section sketches the (meta-)theoretical horizons of critical policy research in order to discuss the main approaches adopted by critical education policy scholars (and in the contributions of this book): cultural political economy, critical discourse analysis, policy field analysis, governmentality study, micropolitical analysis, feminist theory, post-colonial theory and philosophical analysis. The third section discusses some classifications and analytical tools that are being used to examine education policy. In the concluding section of the chapter, different styles of critical policy research are distinguished in order to emphasise the idea that when policy makers become critical there is perhaps an urgent need for critical scholars to become concerned.

THE NEW IMPETUS FOR A CRITICAL EDUCATION POLICY ORIENTATION

The first part of the introduction chapter described the appearance of the critical policy orientation during the 1980s and 1990s, emerging as it did in close relation with the education reforms of that time. In this section we discuss the challenges at both the level of society and theory that seem to give a new impetus to critical policy research. Six sets of challenges will be discussed: a) parochialism and cosmopolitanism, b) globalisation, c) the role of state government, d) neoliberalism, third way policies and social justice, e) theory development, f) evidence based policy, and g) critical and concerned research.
a) Old fashioned parochialism and trendy cosmopolitanism

The first set of challenges relates to a tension in studies of education policy concerning whether these studies are guided by research interests in education or whether the main focus is on policy (cf. Halpin, 1994, Raab, 1994a). Part of this is the question whether education policy is regarded as a distinctive domain of study in need of specific research and theorisation or whether it is important to embrace the broader domain of policy, politics and social or cultural theory, and to rely on research and methodologies developed elsewhere. At an even more general level, there is a discussion whether education policy should be a distinctive focus or whether the focus on policy should be regarded as part of the broader interest in power in education and society.

According to Dale (1994, p. 32), there is a tendency to “disciplinary parochialism” – implying that scholars sometimes regard education and its research tools as highly distinctive. Hence scholars rarely go beyond disciplinary boundaries, and if they do they merely incorporate other approaches instead of using them to rework and reorient their own distinctive discipline. Additionally, and this is also stressed by Lingard (2006) and Lingard & Ozga (2007), a kind of parochialism is noted with regard to education as a policy domain or sector. This is related to what Robertson and Dale (2008) call “methodological educationalism.” From the viewpoint of educationalists education is often confined to the formal education sector. Consequently, the policy focus is limited through one’s formal educational lenses. Through “institutional parochialism” (Dale, 2005), or the tendency within educational studies to take the existing education system as their focus, a similar narrowing of research takes shape. An additional limitation here is to focus mainly on the overt conflicts and interests in policy and politics, and on instrumental and governmental forms of power. What is being disregarded here is the broader field of power relations and how policies are dispersed across both discursive and non-discursive practices (Popkewitz, 1996). Taking into account the current state of affairs, several other kinds of parochialism are worth mentioning (cf. Lingard & Gale, 2007).

In today’s societies, practices and discourses on the knowledge society and lifelong learning are clearly challenging the education and school oriented vocabularies (e.g. Biesta, 2006; Fejes & Nicoll, 2008). The least one could say is that term ‘education’ today has become something that has to be clearly defined, especially in relation to the fields of learning and work. Additionally, the sector of vocational education, often framed within human capital investment approaches, is increasingly interwoven with socio-economic policies (e.g. Dale & Robertson, 2007). As a consequence, the notion ‘education policy’ itself is in need of careful definition. Furthermore, technological advancements in society and education (such as in ICT) correlate clearly with new patterns of power, regulation and inclusion/exclusion, and lead to new ways of organising public space and distributing common goods, and to new opportunities to stabilise or change society (e.g. Burbules & Callister, 2000). Hence, there is a need to become attentive to new forms of power, and new forms of resistance and public action. Finally, it is
important to focus on the changed context of research itself. Cases in point are the
current tendency to orient research on education towards meeting the needs of
evidence based practice and policy (Ozga, 2000), and the often limited
internationalisation of the research agenda (Appadurai, 2001). This demands a
careful reflection upon the relation between critical education policy research and
the evidence oriented science apparatus, as well as reflection on the very meaning
of academic research in a global context. With regard to the latter, we can agree
with Appadurai (2001, p. 15) of the need for a “de-parochialisation of the research
ethic – of the idea of research itself.” (see further below)

It is evident that parochialism with regard to one’s own discipline while facing
these developments results in an impoverished critical policy orientation. More
importantly, such theoretical and epistemological limitation can have a political
downside. “Methodological statism and nationalism”, that is limiting one’s analysis
to state policies and politics within the state and assuming a fixed linkage between
government and territory in a single nation, actually re-enforces a given state of
affairs at the national and international level (Robertson and Dale, 2008). Hence,
Lingard claims in line with Bourdieu that the “rejection of epistemological
innocence is central to the deparochialising project and a disposition of
epistemological diffidence” (Lingard, 2006, p. 291).

However, most scholars today re-focus their lenses. Perhaps there is another risk
here: questioning different types of parochialism from the viewpoint of a
fashionable ‘academic cosmopolitanism’. The embraced cosmopolitanism is often
tainted with implicit assumptions of universally shared global orientations and
criticism. It leads to the assumption that we all think and act the same, suffer from
the same kind of policy diseases and are in need of the same medicine. In view of
these assumptions, it is vitally important that critically oriented research is attentive
to the limits of academic cosmopolitanism as well (see Appadurai, 2001;
Popkewitz, 2008).

We want to conclude this section on parochialism by mentioning possible
challenges to the often taken for granted ‘welfare connection’ between education
and policy itself. The connection being made between education and policy is
traditionally a two-way connection; on the one hand studying the policy context of
education but on the other hand studying how policies could be used to improve
education and its role in society. The background for this critical orientation is
clearly the modern welfare state that conceives of education as a major component
of public policy. The general principles of welfare policy, often taken for granted
by critical scholars, are ‘the change of education through change of public policy’
and ‘the change of society through change of education’. What we want to stress
is the importance of being aware of a sort of ‘critical/advocacy parochialism’ at the
level of these principles. Facing the crisis of the welfare state and state
government, these principles are no longer evident. Or to formulate this in a
positive way, a major challenge will be to discuss what ‘the public, and its
education’ is about in today’s global context, and how education and policy are
related and should be related.

38
b) Research scripts for the global scene

A second important set of challenges is related to globalisation. As a social phenomenon, this term is generally used to refer to the economic, political and cultural processes leading to new practices, connections and discourses at the supranational level, and consequently related to processes that modify local identities and perceptions of space and time. In Giddens’ words: “Globalisation can thus be defined as the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa” (Giddens, 1990, p. 64). Held et al. specifically stress the “widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary life” (Held et al., 1999, p. 2). Next to action at the distance and interconnectedness, globalisation includes a number of other developments: new modes of production/development, new forms of communication and new technologies leading to “time-space compression” (Harvey, 1990, p. 350; Bauman, 1998); network patterned social structures reflecting new social and political identities (Castells, 1996); new modes of governance, new processes of and actors/agencies in policy making and the formation of “competitive” or “performative” states (Cerny, 1997; Yeatman, 1994; Dale, 1999; Ball, 1998).

Many of these developments are acknowledged in studies with a critical policy orientation. Indeed, many scholars have meanwhile subscribed to what Bourdieu refers to as “the policy of globalisation”: “I deliberately say a ‘policy of globalisation’, and do not speak of ‘globalisation’ as if it were a natural process.” In revealing his specific theoretical commitment he continues: “This policy is to a large extent kept secret, as far as its production and distribution is concerned. And a whole work of research is needed at this point, to reveal it before it can be put into practice” (Bourdieu, 2001a/2008, p. 380). Meanwhile, several aspects of the policy and politics of globalisation have become a concern for critical investigation: the impact of globalisation (including new supranational organisations, new forms of internationalisation, Europeanisation, etc.), globalisation effects, new forms of policy borrowing and the changed role of the state, global framing of education policy and politics, the formation of a global policy field, the role and impact of the World Bank, OECD (and PISA), GATS, the relation between travelling and embedded policies … (Halpin, 1994; Taylor et al., 1997; Dale, 1999; Burbules & Torres, 2000; Tikly, 2001; Robertson, 2005; Rizvi, 2004; Ozga & Lingard, 2007; Henry et al., 2001; Ozga, Seddon & Popkewitz, 2006).

The global framing of policy and politics thus clearly broadens the research domain of critical studies: researchers ‘globalise’ their agenda and broaden the often state-oriented methodological and theoretical approaches. Two further challenges linked up with globalisation are worth mentioning: 1) international comparisons and 2) globalised advocacy.

1) The field of comparative education research is traditionally characterised by a strong focus on education policy and politics (Noah, 1984; Bray, 2003). Historical as well as empirical studies within this field attempted to portray differences in educational structures and outcomes as related to differences in educational
administration, education policy and the political context and culture in a country. Many of these cross-national studies were typically aligned with educational planning at the level of state government, and were intended to meet the need for well-informed policy borrowing (Halpin & Troya, 1995).

From the 1960s onwards, empirical cross-national research became conducted or organised by international organisations (UNESCO, World Bank, OECD). From the 1990s the data collected by these organisations clearly gained political prominence (Henry et al., 2001). This data collection is part of the emerging global policy field that focuses on the collection and distribution of information on performance and best practices. Additionally, the specific global governance mechanisms that are emerging are linked up with national policy trends towards deregulation and devolution. What takes shape in this new strategic governance field is “government by numbers” (Rose, 1999; see also Desrosieres, 1998, Porter, 1995) and “steering by evaluation” (Lindblad & Popkewitz, 2000; Power, 1997).

Importantly, within this strategic and comparative policy field nation states come to see themselves, and particularly their policy objectives, policy domains and resources for policy legitimisation, in a new way (Henry et al., 2001; Lawn & Lingard, 2002). The global field is constituted as a market of national education systems with policy makers obsessed with competitive self-improvement (Haahr, 2004; Simons, 2007).

What we want to stress at this point is that a particular kind of global policy analysis and comparative education has become part of the assemblage of the global policy field (Dale, 2006, p. 184). Indeed, as Nóvoa & Yariv-Marshá (2003) clarify, the actual comparison of states and modes of international benchmarking have become modes of governance and policy. Thus critically position oneself towards this global regime of power and knowledge and including popular comparative education research is an important challenge for scholars. Critically oriented research indeed has to come to terms with the practice of comparison, and the underlying assumptions regarding commensurability and the role of modern states. In dealing with these challenges, Dale (2006) suggests that critically orientated researchers follow Santos here and shift from a modern and state based and oriented focus on “comparison” to “translation.” Focusing on mechanisms of translation at different levels and in different contexts is regarded as a way to expand the critical research imagination and go beyond forms of parochialism.

2) The second challenge related to globalisation has to do with the critical advocacy component. The questions that emerge today are: who to address critically in the global policy field, who are the important actors in the global field, how to address actors that are often not identifiable as classic education workers, how to inform a global public opinion, and to ask what is ‘the public’ in a global context and how are issues of global justice to be addressed? (cf. Bourdieu, 2001/2008, 2000/2008) Acknowledging the importance of these questions, Appadurai suggests discussing radically the Western assumptions on research ethics and effective critique. Additionally, he stresses the importance of worldwide collaboration and new forms of dialogue for the globalisation and democratisation of knowledge on globalisation and democracy. In his view, these
forms of collaboration and dialogue can support “grassroots globalisation” or “globalisation from below”, and play a role in shaping alternative “social imaginaries” (Appadurai, 2001, p. 20). Acknowledging the importance of new imaginaries of and new knowledge for informed citizenship, it is suggested that current challenges related to globalisation are framed in terms of the “right to research” and the “democratisation of this right to research” (Appadurai, 2006). This critical focus on the global policy field however not only links the global and the local, but also opens up a perspective that focuses on the ‘gap’ between the North and the South, and broadens the often Western (and state based) conception of social justice (Arnove & Torres, 1999; Tikly, 2001).

The previous set of challenges clearly indicates that the critical education policy orientation is gaining a new momentum from what is called globalisation. Rizvi nicely summarises what is at stake:

If national policies, which have been the objects of our research efforts, have themselves acquired international, transnational and global dimensions, then we need to ask how this has become so, and what implications this has for thinking about national policy programs, local policy initiatives and internationalising policy dialogue. It is this research agenda that is, in my view, fundamental to the globalisation of education policy research. But beyond this, it is essential to our attempts to develop an alternative education policy agenda to neo-liberalism, which demands not only fine sounding policies but also the creation of an alternative social imaginary committed to strong democracy and global justice (Rizvi, 2006, p. 203).

c) The new state of the old state

One particular challenge that is related to the previously discussed globalisation challenges is worth mentioning: the role of the nation state in education policy, and the re-emergence of the problematic of the state in the global policy field. We will start the exploration with a short outline of the discussion between Marxism and pluralist (elitist) approaches to education policy.

To put it very broadly, pluralist approaches assume there is a plurality of values and power distributed throughout society, and they assume that governments attempt to represent through the policy process as many interest groups as possible (Parsons, 1995, p. 134). While the pluralist approach focuses mainly on the distribution of power, elitist approaches conceive of power as something that is concentrated, and they focus on how governments act along the values and interest of particular elite groups (ibid., p. 248). One could say that neo-Marxist (conflict) approaches take this elitist position further and claim that basically groups who play a major role in the capitalist economy have a hold on government and education policies. To put the latter in more classic terms: “political legal and ideological apparatuses are grounded in conditions within the material economic infrastructure” (Turner & Mitchell, 1997, p. 24). Of course, there are various strands of neo-Marxist theory, differing for instance with regard to the level of
autonomy of the state apparatus and the ideological role of culture and intellectuals (cf. Aronowitz & Giroux, 1994, pp. 65ff).

In order to discuss the challenges posed by globalisation, we will explore how these approaches take shape within the field of education policy studies. Firstly we will discuss some examples in the United Kingdom and Australia, and then some examples from scholarly work in the United States.

The difference between the pluralists and the elitists is connected to the debate in the 1990s between state-centred approaches and approaches of the policy process and cycle (Vidovich, 2002). The state-centred approaches examine the role of state apparatuses and ideologies in capitalist societies, and on how education is organised and governed. The policy process approach addresses the role of actors and their interests in different stages of the policy process which leads to particular decisions and policy measures. The debate is represented in Dale’s (1989) focus on the (macro) politics of education and on the role of the state on the one hand and Ball’s (1990; 1994a/b) focus on the (micro) politics involved in education policies within the state on the other hand. The first type of research discusses the changing production structures, the functional division of labour in the coordination of education and the role of the state, while the second type of research considers policies in changed societal and cultural patterns, taking into account the readings and meanings of local actors, and the emerging discourses and trajectories. In sum, there is a theoretical (political) perspective on structures, divisions and tasks, next to an analytical (sociological) approach of trajectories and meanings. There have been attempts to transcend both perspectives however. It is suggested for instance that the focus should be on the relative autonomy of the state as a kind of strategic terrain where actors struggle inside the policy process and over policy texts. In line with this, Lingard (1993, 1995) speaks about the micro-politics at the level of the state, which is an acknowledgement of pluralism in the context of administration, bureaucracies and other state terrains. Focusing on intermediate “policy networks”, and in line of neo-pluralist approaches, Raab also (1994a/b) seeks to transcend the old tensions between state and policy actors, and between macro and micro.

In the United States, an analogous development and discussion can be noticed. Embracing neo-Marxist assumptions, Torres (1989) for instance develops a political sociological framework to explain public and education policy-making in capitalist and developing countries. Similarly, within Apple’s neo-Marxist framework there is an emphasis on the role of the state. However, in his emphasis on the role of the state Apple explicitly criticises so-called liberal pluralist approaches (Apple, 1982 p. 29; pp. 120–134). These pluralist approaches assume that policies represent a diversity of interests, but Apple suggests instead that the focus should be on the concentration of interest and power in relation to the accumulation of power, and on the ideological meaning of cultural struggles (around the school and curriculum). One could argue that the work of Popkewitz (1996, p. 27; cf. 1991) represents another approach. His focus on the emerged systems of reasoning and the power of these knowledge systems is another attempt to rethink and reconceptualise the problem of social regulation and consequently the problematic of the state. Contrary to functionalist and/or Marxist accounts, his
Foucauldian inspired “political sociology” approach studies the social production of actors, images and ideas, and their contingent assemblage. The focus here is on how the state emerges as an actor within a particular system of reasoning.

During the 1990s the problematic of the state has been lifted out of these discussions, and gradually has been reframed. In this context, it is worth mentioning two developments: 1) the introduction and use of the term governance and 2) the practical and theoretical repositioning of state government.

1) Except for normative uses, the term governance is used as an analytical lens to look at power and regulation mechanisms beyond common policy and government practices: the processes of governing and bottom-up decision making by people at different levels of both governmental and non-governmental organisations; non-hierarchical (private/public) networks of governing; specific ways of coordination analytically distinguished from the agents and institutions involved in governing and the act of governing or steering itself (Kooiman, 1993; Rhodes, 1997; Stoker, 1998; Jessop, 2000). In line with this, the term refers as well to actual changes in the organisation of society, and particularly the changed role of state government in relation to the emergence of new practices of regulation and coordination both locally and globally. Authors such as Rosenau argue that what takes shape is “governance without government” (Rosenau, 1992). An illustration of this development is seen at the level of international organisations and the networks of private and public collaboration in regions in the European Union (Dale, 1999). Elaborating on this, policy scholars attempt to describe the repositioning of governments and states in accordance with the new patterns and networks of governance. The state, here, is regarded as a regulator, and as responsible for “metagovernance” or “coordination of coordination” (Maroy, 2004; Dale, 1997; see also Jessop, 2000).

Despite the above mentioned diversity, a common concern underlying the use of the term governance is to disconnect the question of power and regulation from the question of government and particularly from the problematic of the state. Accordingly, it becomes possible to rethink the question of government and the state in relation to new practices of governance. State government can be regarded as something that is part of a broader system of education governance. Thus the term governance, both as part of an analytical perspective or as a term indicating new developments in society, may support the viewpoint of the critical policy scholar.

2) The second development worth mentioning in order to understand the new way the problematic of the state is posed is related to globalisation. The opening up of the black box of globalisation indeed puts some of the traditional theoretical tensions to the background, or at least, leads to a reformulation of the problematic of the state (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Bottery, 2000; Lingard, 2000; Rizvi, 2004; Ozga & Lingard, 2007; Ball, 1998; Dale, 1999). Dale (2008) for instance suggest that the nation-state should not be located at the level of the *explanans* but the *explanandum*, and that scholars should take into account different overlapping “scales of politics and policy.” The focus on scales, and distinguishing between the local, regional, national and international, is regarded as a way to resist what is
called “spatial fetishism” by Benner (1999). Spatial fetishism refers to the tendency to approach the global as a new, but self-evident additional component in the social context and hence ignoring differences at the level of scales and forms of re-scaling.

Different approaches have been developed with regard to state government and state policies at the level of the explanandum. Ball (1998) suggests remaining attentive to processes of “re-contextualisation” and to the role of local politics and cultures in the translation of “global and generic” solutions. Relying on Bourdieu, Lingard (2005) suggests the emerging global policy field should be analysed, as well as cross-field effects within the state (see Lingard & Rawolle, 2004; Lingard et al., 2005a/b; Rawolle, 2005). In a similar vein, Ozga and Lingard (2007, p. 69) point at the emergence of the “globalised education policy field situated between global pressures and local vernacular education policy responses”, and they propose to study in detail “vernacular globalisation” (Appadurai, 1996). The concern here is not only with “travelling policies”, that is, with how policies get globally dispersed. Equally important is to examine how global policies are connected with “embedded policies.” Addressing a similar concern, Arnove and Torres (1999) discuss the “dialectic between the global and the local.” From still another perspective, Popkewitz (1996) speaks of the “international circulation of ideas” and Lindblad & Popkewitz (2004) suggest focusing on “travelling policies.” The latter means that it is revealing to take for instance a close look at the controversies around ‘educational restructuring’ that are produced in different national contexts. A specific case is current policy research with regard to the European Union. Here, scholars start to focus on the new policy actors that enter the scene, how member states are being re-positioned, and how they come to develop national education policies embedded within a competitive European framework (Lawn & Lingard, 2002; Haahr, 2004; Simons, 2007). In line with Bourdieu, Lingard (2006, p. 293) argues that it is the amount of “national capital” possessed by a nation that should be regarded as a major factor in determining the space of resistance within a global context and the degree for autonomy for the development of policy within the nation.

In sum, what these critical studies share is an attempt to rethink the problematic of the state in view of the emergence of globalised policies and education restructuring discourses. Elaborating on the observed shift from the so-called “welfare state” to the “competition” (Yeatman, 1993; Cerny, 1997), “evaluative” (Neave, 1998) or “performative” (Ball, 2000) state, there is special attention to the way state government reformulates, justifies and develops education policies and becomes an actor among other actors in the global field of governance. Indeed, it is noticed that far from retreating, the post-welfare state develops new ways of governing. A case in point is the state’s role in organising output control in education and in setting the framework for entrepreneurial freedom, quality assurance and choice (see Hudson, 2007). This leads to the next set of challenges: the many guises of post-welfare policies.
d) Right way solutions adopted by third way policies

Although dating back to the end of 1970s, and intrinsically bound with the development of the critical orientation to education policy (see part 1 of the introduction), scholars remain attentive to the conditions of what is often referred to with the term neoliberalism. Harvey attempts to grasp the elusive term as follows:

Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices (Harvey, 2005, p. 2).

While Harvey mainly focuses on theoretical developments, other authors try to grasp conditions and consequences of neoliberalism for education and education policy. Scholars study for instance the educational restructuring included within neoliberal policies, that is, “schooling reform in hard times” (Lingard, Knight & Porter, 1993). Topics being discussed are: the politics of quality assurance systems and standardisation; the impact of policies on parental choice, diversification and increased school autonomy; the effects of new forms of responsibility and accountability; and the politics and effects of decentralisation and marketisation (e.g. Whitty et al. 1993; Whitty et al., 1998; Kenway et al., 1993; Apple, 1993; Gewirtz et al., 1995; Weiler, 1990; Lauglo, 1995; Marginson, 1997; and for support of particular neoliberal reforms: Chubb & Moe, 1990; Tooley, 1996).

We will not discuss the critical study of neoliberalism in detail here. We want to limit ourselves to discussion of four less obvious challenges that are becoming more pressing at the start of the twenty-first century: 1) the adoption of neoliberal tools within the Third Way policies, 2) the need to reformulate ideas of social justice, 3) the renewed attention for pedagogy and teacher professionalism/teacher education, and 4) the critical sensitivity for master signifiers such as neoliberalism and globalisation.

1) Throughout the 1990s, the scholarly interest in new modes of government and social regulation continued. An interesting observation was that aside from so-called liberal policy makers, also social democrats and ‘third way’ political administrations came to rely on policy measures previously classified under the general term neoliberalism (Rose, 1999; Olssen et al., 2004; Tomlinson, 2005; Ball, 2008). Measures related to output control, managerialism and responsabilisation did not disappear with the change of political coalitions. The result is that in contrast to the 1980s and the early 1990s, and at least in the United Kingdom and several other European countries, policy scholars are no longer merely describing the policies of so-called neoliberal and neoconservative administrations. Instead they are clearly spotlighting continuities at the level of policy measures and mechanisms (Furlong, 2005; Tomlinson, 2005; Ball, 2008).
As a consequence, critical advocacy becomes directed to those policy makers that at an ideological level represented the progressive alternative.

2) The widespread use of measures and policy options previously associated only with neoliberalism, actually leads to a situation where social democracy can no longer be identified with social justice, and neoliberalism can no longer be used as a synonym for social injustice. The challenge here is to open up the black box of social justice, and to rethink critically the idea of social justice and equity as promoted through education policy. Seddon, for instance, stresses the importance of being extremely careful with identifying post-welfare education and the impact of neoliberal policy measures with “unjust education” (Seddon, 2003). Instead, it is suggested to go beyond the large categories such as neoliberalism, social democracy and third way policy, and to adopt an adequate perspective that enables analysis of policies in their contexts as well as analysis of the specific practice of social justice.

3) The new developments in policy and education are not just analysed at the level of theories, assumptions and ideologies and evaluated against the background of social justice, democracy and freedom (Apple, 2003; Giroux, 2004; Olssen et al., 2004). In the wake of current education policies, and this can be regarded as the third challenge, there is a specific focus on issues related to teacher professionalism and pedagogy. Current developments are analysed at the level of local discourses, the related technologies and practices and the effects on teachers and students (Ball, 2003; Webb, 2005, 2006). The concern here is the impact of managerial, market-related and performance-oriented reforms on teaching and pedagogy, on the professionalism and autonomy of teachers, on teacher education policy and school leadership (cf. Ball, 1998, 2003; Whitty, 2002; Furlong, 2005; Cochran-Smith, 2005; Hargreaves, 2000; Smyth, 2002; Avis, 2003, Menter et al., 2006). These studies could be regarded as evaluation and implementation studies; however their orientation is clearly critical. Their aim is to evaluate the implementation and effects of current reform policies, not in the first place to improve policy making, but to critically assess the impact on the values assumed in professionalism and pedagogy.

4) A final challenge relates to the role of so-called master signifiers today. We mentioned earlier that most critical studies of education policy no longer take notions such as globalisation, the state, neoliberalism or social justice for granted. Scholars acknowledge that the notions in themselves have little analytical or explanatory value. However, it is one thing to open up the conceptual problematic or to articulate and make explicit the meaning of these terms or the practices and discourses implied. Another critical approach is to regard the notions themselves as being part of global policy discourses. Nóvoa (2002) speaks for instance about “planet speak”, a sort of “worldwide bible” and the circulation of “magical concepts” that are the roots of all evil or the solutions for all problems. In line with this, Lindblad and Popkewitz (2004) refer to neoliberalism, as well as educational restructuring, as planet-speak and “elevator words” (Ian Hacking) relating different practices in order to create objects, to identify problems and to create ways to talk about them and to offer solutions. According to these writers, the challenge is to
analyse the discourses on globalisation, neoliberalism and the changed state, where and how they emerged, and how they work (rather than just analysing the dominant discourse of neoliberalism).

e) Between theoretical inspiration and inspired theories

Clearly not disconnected from social and political developments, new challenges at the level of theory building, methodology and data use arise. Several issues are explored here: 1) the relation between the theoretical and the empirical, 2) the importance of specific concerns, 3) new theories and methods, and 4) the use of quantitative data.

1) During the early 1990s many authors noticed that critical studies often addressed specific policies, and then proceeded to study these cases in an ad hoc fashion (Ozga, 1990; Lingard, 1993; Troyna, 1994; Raab, 1994b; Dale, 1994; Ball, 1990, 1994a/b). The main concern of these writers is that this ad hoc focus actually troubles genuine theory building. There are several points of view here. Some scholars express the concern that the qualitative methodology used (such as case-studies based on interviews and observation), and the focus on micro-politics at micro-levels do not allow us to get a picture of the broader context of education policy (for instance, the politics of education) (Dale, 1994; Troyna, 1994; Hatcher & Troyna, 1994). However, from the side of the qualitative, micro-oriented research that is criticised here, the diagnosis is different. Their concern is that policy research in education is often “commentary and critique” and lacking “empirical research” (Ball, 1990, p. 9). Empirical research and taking particular policies and their trajectories as a point of departure, as well as drawing upon social theories of the post-modern condition, are regarded as essential in explanatory and sociological theory building – something that Ball (1994a/b) regards as an important challenge as well. Thus from different perspectives the development of critical sociological theories of education policy is recommended as a major task.

In contrast to these perspectives, Halpin (1994, p. 201) stresses the importance of non-sociological theories as well as the elaboration of theories on the implementation of policies (and theorising what works and what doesn’t work and for what reasons). Additionally, he proposes that the conception of supportive research methods should be broadened to include discourse analysis and fine grained content analysis beyond actor and intention focused observation, interviews and text analysis (cf. Taylor et al, 1997, p. 43). In short, it is suggested to broaden the definition of what valuable theories and valuable methods concerning education policy and politics are expected to be.

2) Perhaps it is crucial to mention that for scholars with a critical policy orientation the definition of theory should take one important issue into account. The point of departure for critical studies is often neither situated at the level of theory, nor a well defined ad hoc case. The point of departure instead seems to be a particular concern, yet clearly not disconnected from theoretical perspectives and existing cases. The definition of a valuable theory hence is inspired by this
commitment, and develops in relation to the scholar’s involvement with the present. In short, if the term critical research addresses the relation of concern between the researcher and society, or between the researcher and her present, then critical research of education policy can never be either solely theory-oriented or merely applied. The critical orientation is embedded in a matter of concern, and in view of such a specific concern the theoretical and the practical are intertwined.

3) Except for challenges regarding the role of theory, critical policy studies are challenged by ongoing developments at the level of theories and methods. We limit ourselves to the outline of some influential developments. From the 1980s onwards, the problematic of gender and racism is regarded as highly important in studies of education policy and politics, and is related to the need to have theoretical and methodological tools to address these topics (Troya, 1994; Ferguson, 1984; Henry & Taylor, 1993; Giroux, 1997; Marshall & Anderson, 1995; Marshall, 1999). Next, and in close relation to globalisation, there is the emergence of postcolonialism and specifically the critique of adopting Western points of view in (comparative) theory and politics, embedded within discourses, concepts and ways of looking (Young, 2003; Rizvi, 2004; Tikly, 2001). At a more general epistemological and meta-theoretical level, post-structuralism, anti-foundationalism and post-positivist methodologies have been part of the debate since the 1990s. The debate involved the questioning of modern assumptions regarding knowledge, truth, facts, theory, critique etc., and related to this, the modern role of critical scholarship (Cherryholmes, 1998; Usher & Edwards, 1994; Scheurich, 1994; Peters, 1996; Humes & Bryce, 2003). In view of previous developments, some new lines of study emerged. Instead of looking at texts, intentions and interpretation, scholars shifted attention to the study of policy as discourse, the politics of policy discourses, or discourses as politics. And instead of actor or subject oriented approaches, scholars adopted approaches focusing on the discursive constitution of types of (gendered) subjects and subjectivities, and local struggles of resistance around this constitution (Butler, 1990).

An example is the Foucauldian-inspired approach of “social epistemology”, where speech and the use of particular concepts such as ‘youth at risk’ are regarded as the effect of (productive) power (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998, p. 9). In line with this, there is a cultural history approach (Popkewitz et al., 2001) incorporating a focus on the “cultural politics of text.” Research in line with the cultural history approach does not take policy agencies and their interests as given entities, but studies how discourse constitutes, for example, the relation between state and university departments (Heyning, 2001). Another example is the attempt to combine materialist approaches and post-structuralist approaches in line with Foucault (Fairclough, 1989; Olssen, 1999). The attempt here is to locate the power of discourses within a particular cultural and economic reality, and thereby combine discourse analysis with social analysis. Another perspective is “political spectacle theory” (Edelman, 1988). As an elaboration of symbolic interactionism, political spectacle theory focuses on the symbolic forms in the political process. Education policy as political spectacle is located at the intersection of governance, media and economy, and is analysed at the level of symbolic language. In line with this
orientation to the symbolic, the following issues can be addressed: “casting political actors as leaders, allies, and enemies; dramaturgy (staging, plotting, and costuming); the illusion of rationality; the illusion of democratic participation, disconnection between means and ends; and distinguishing the action on stage from the action backstage” (Smith et al., 2004, p. 12). Ultimately, the scholar is interested in the struggles and dominant interest behind the spectacle.

The main focus of the debates around new theories and methodologies during the 1990s was the modernist-postmodernist discussion, and particularly discussions about relativism-universalism, foundationalism-antifoundationalism, inductive-deductive, and construction-deconstruction approaches. These arguments are not closed or decided today; however, it seems the discussion is no longer central to academic debates. Studies with a critical education policy orientation remain driven principally by major social concerns posed by challenges such as globalisation, neoliberalism and managerialism. Perhaps, this moves the meta-discussions about the assumptions of theory and methodology to the background, or connects the discussion at least to specific questions posed by society. At this point it is worth mentioning two relatively new concerns: the need for alternative conceptions of education, pedagogy, democracy and social justice.

It is striking to see how both old and new philosophies and theories inform the critical education policy perspective. Their mixed usage seems to surpass the modernism-postmodernism debate. For instance, Foucault’s work on governmentality or Bourdieu’s work on policy fields is elaborated in combination with empirical methods (Masschelein et al., 2007; Fejes & Nicoll, 2008; Lingard et al., 2005a/b). The need for a straightforward and positively formulated critical and/or normative stance towards social and political developments in general, and towards education policy and politics specifically is also prominent. Examples are: education and the question of democracy, participation and recognition (in line with Habermas, Fraser, Benhabib, Honeth, Rancière), social justice, education policy, capabilities or capacities for social practice (in line with Sen, Nussbaum), teaching, politics and the dimension of responsibility, freedom, justice and virtues (in line with Levinas, Lyotard, Derrida, Bauman), and practical wisdom, phronesis and education (MacIntyre). Additionally, scholars express a renewed interest in the moral and social role of ‘education and pedagogy’, and critical discussion of the dominant practices and discourses on lifelong learning (Biesta, 2006). It should be noted however that in critically orientated policy studies these theories and philosophies are mentioned, discussed or applied, but are not often guiding and orienting the policy research.

4) Regarding the concern with quantification, some more background information should be given. Within education policy studies, traditionally there is a tension between the use of quantitative and qualitative methods. The critical policy orientation during the 1980s and 1990s, at least those studies rooted in new sociology of education approaches, mainly relied upon qualitative methods. As mentioned earlier, the newer methods are also qualitative, for example (critical) discourse analysis (Codd, 1988; Ball, 1994a/b; Taylor, 1997). The methods that are used rely on interpretation and qualitative data, and critical scholarship seems to
turn itself away from quantitative research methods (such as large data-bases on school input and outputs, longitudinal research programs etc.) (Apple, 1996, p. 127). Additionally, and this is currently enforced by recent evidence-based policies, critical scholars often identify quantitative research methods with instrumental policy analysis and with classic political arithmetic. From this perspective, any type of quantification seems to become a critical concern, instead of a possible valuable method for critical education policy research. There are voices, however, to include quantitative methods in critical education policy research. As Halpin (1994, p. 199) claims:

(…) interpretative approaches favoured by many education policy analysts often inform very well the thinking of members of their intellectual communities, but fail to penetrate the minds of policy makers who are seeking answers to more prosaic, but nonetheless important questions about the relative merits of different proposals for reform and improvement.

In line with this, Lauder et al. (2004) talk about a new kind of “political arithmetic” that is part of critical scholarship and that gathers and discusses quantitative data on effects in relation to social justice aims (cf. Gale, 2001, p. 382). In a similar vein, Luke argues for critical policy researchers to start playing an active and constructive role in “redressing” the numeric data in policy making (Luke, 2003, p. 98). Instead of criticising the data as such, he suggests paying attention to the narratives linked up with numeric evidences in current policy making, and giving support to new narratives and to contextualise numeric data in new ways (see further below).

f) Research that works and unemployed research

Another set of important challenges arises from the changed relation between research and policy making, particularly with the advent of so-called “evidence based policy” and related movements of “evidence-based practice” in teaching during the 1990s (Young et al., 2002). Governments have always relied on particular knowledge in decision making. What is currently referred to as evidence based policy clearly includes a particular kind of public policy, a particular kind of evidence, and a particular need for research on education. Governments adopting procedures of New Public Management and looking for ways to render themselves and professionals accountable to citizen-consumers are permanently seeking for performance-oriented re-structuring, and hence, for particular evidence.

What counts as evidence today is mainly related to the achievement of targets and examples of best performance, and on the identification of procedures, options and measures that have proven to be efficient or effective in view of these targets and performance indicators. The required evidence is thus regarded as knowledge on ‘what works’ (Davies et al., 2000). For instance, in line with the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) in the US one of the concerns of public policy is implementing programs that have ‘scientifically’ proven to lead to improved scores on
standardised tests (Luke, 2003, p. 89). The concern with evidence today thus is a concern with ‘what works’ or with what contributes to ‘excellent performance’.

One reason for the increased governmental influence on education research and on the actual instrumental value of outcomes in education research is clearly the strategic role of education and lifelong learning in the knowledge society and particularly the knowledge economy (Ozga et al., 2006; Ozga & Lingard, 2007, p. 78). The current knowledge society seems to be a “totally pedagogised society” (Bernstein, 2001) where educational, social and economic policies are converging (Ball, 2008). Thus, the investment in education, and different types of investment in human capital, is more then ever linked up with economic policies. Against this strategic background, the so-called semi-professional diversity of teachers’ personal judgement should give away to programs and procedures that have proven to result in high performance. As a result, a specific kind of research on education and learning becomes of strategic importance. Especially in the United States and the United Kingdom the needs of governments for evidence on ‘what works’ has a considerable impact on education research. There are debates however on whether this link between policy and research, and the implied expectations towards both policy and research, are tenable and justified (Hammersley, 2002; Ozga, 2000).

Additionally, we should consider the emergence of the new global policy field in discussing these issues. This field is to a large extent an assemblage of particular research on ‘what works’ and ‘excellent performance’ in education. Thus, education governance is increasingly linked with data collection and numbers on performance indicators, which in reality leads to the development of patterns of “governing by numbers” or “policy as numbers” (Rose, 1999; Ball, 1998; Lindblad & Popkewitz, 2000; Henry et al., 2001; Lawn & Lingard, 2002; Simons, 2007; Grek, 2009). There is a politics involved in the presentation of examples of excellent performance and international comparisons, and policy makers rely on the media not just to inform citizens about new policy measures but actually to shape policies. The “mediatisation of education policy” clearly plays a role here (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004).

Confronted with evidence based policy or the “governmental re-articulation of analysis for policy”, critical scholarship faces different challenges (Lingard & Ozga, 2007, p. 6, italics in original). It makes scholars increasingly aware of their own position in the making of policy, and thus asks for a kind of “epistemic reflexivity” focusing on one’s relation to the needs of government and one’s role in the “politics of research” (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p. 181). Within the current politics of research, critical scholars have to position themselves towards the regular policy research arena that became analysis for policy, towards all sorts of meta-research that investigates how to improve the arena of policy-oriented research, and towards diverse types of education research assessment tools that measure the impact of one’s research. As a consequence, the critical education policy scholar is no longer only orientated towards the field of education policy, but also towards the evidence-producing research fabric that is part of policy.
Noticing these developments, Ozga (2000, 2007) suggests looking for new relationships between governing, policy and research (cf. Ozga & Lingard, 2007). What is suggested is to hold to the idea that critical policy scholarship includes a particular kind of critical advocacy, relying on a particular conception of equality and social justice. Thus instead of withdrawing oneself from the evidence based policy context, Ozga & Lingard (2007, pp. 78–79) suggest looking for new ways to relate to both education and research policies and to resist dominant modes of research steering:

Pressures for research steering in education are very high because of the instability and fluidity of the knowledges that it produces, and because less ‘managed’ research activities may, indeed, have considerable value in the creation of active, independent and creative thinkers and learners. There is, thus a considerable contradiction at the heart of the research steering process, and this opens up spaces for research to rediscover and render explicit its national capital, in terms that are not entirely set by globalising pressures and practices.

Specifically speaking, Ozga (2000) proposes to “remove policy from its pedestal” and to form research communities by bringing together academics and practitioners and their concerns (cf. Vidovich, 2007). There is the suggestion that researchers should look for optimal ways to govern and organise education, which then inform policy making and provide resistance to the dominant evidence based policy agenda that is oriented to ‘what works’ (Ozga, 2000; Lingard & Gale, 2007). Along similar lines, Luke suggests that researchers should not criticise the ideology of evidence based policy as such. Based on the observation that evidence used in policy making is always wrapped in narratives, selectively used and overtly discussed, he argues that it is always possible to re-appropriate and redress the use of evidence in policy development:

As a research community, we need to move towards a richer, more multidisciplinary approach to education analysis and policy development – beyond the crude league tables and single-dimension test score analysis, and beyond critique that explicates the ideological contradictions of these policies but struggles to remake schools and systems in communities’ and student’s interests (Luke, 2003, p. 98).

Hence, Luke suggests to put different ‘evidences’ on the table and to engage researchers, educational workers and policy makers in the development of “new narratives, new pathways and new policies” (ibid., p. 98).

A stronger version of critical advocacy is perhaps Bourdieu’s plea for “collective intellectuals.” Bourdieu underlines the scholar’s role in the development of “rational utopias” in collaboration with (new) social movements and (international) trade unions. The development of these utopias could be based on the “social costs of economic violence, as a way of laying the foundations for an economics of happiness” (Bourdieu, 1997/2008, pp. 292–293). Closely related to this, Halpin argues in line with Giddens for a “utopian realism.” Halpin’s idea is to go beyond
the ideological stance in terms of either-or (for example, either neoliberalism or Marxism/socialism) in the direction of a more pragmatic stance holding to the and-also position, yet to hold to the utopianism included in third way politics for example (Halpin, 1999).

In sum, the critical scholar indeed runs the risk of being unemployed in the large evidence-producing fabric, yet there are certainly other ways to put this research to work.

g) Critical policymakers and concerned scholars

Finally, we wish to briefly focus on the set of challenges arising from the critical ethos that inspires scholarly and policy work. In the last section of this chapter we return to these challenges in more detail.

One major aim of critical policy studies is to reveal how practices, problems and ideas that are taken for granted are in fact part of hidden or not clearly visible social, political or cultural constellations. Critical studies assume that through awareness of contingency (‘things are not necessary this way’), and by taking into account the legitimate rules, goals and/or courses of action, people would be able to liberate themselves and that this would lead to the construction of a more free, just, democratic society. This assumption can be re-formulated as follows: critical thought assumes that facts and problems are socially constructed, that this construction involves power, and that awareness of this construction (based on critical studies) opens up a space for re-construction (cf. Latour, 2004).

Due to these assumptions, critical policy scholarship opposes those ways of thinking that take facts and problems for granted. Indeed, critical scholarship opposes instrumental ways of thinking, such as problem solving theory. Problem solving is about finding the most efficient and effective way to solve problems, and does not imply an awareness of the construction or contingency of the problems. The opponent of critical theory, according to Robertson and Dale (2008) and in line with Robert Cox, is thus problem solving theory. From the perspective of critical scholars, the problem solving way of thinking is naïve in that there is no awareness of the power and politics involved at the level of the problem-formulation and definition. Several critical scholars question the basic assumptions of the critical project however. What they notice is that its assumptions seem to have become common sense outside the academic sphere of critical theory.

Latour, for instance, sees a remarkable overlap in critical attitude between his own critical research on the construction of scientific facts (revealing how what is taken for granted as fact or object by scientists is socially constructed) and the current attitude of policymakers. Policymakers, he notices, have come to adopt a similar attitude when they argue that particular problems or facts should not be taken for granted. Latour mentions the example of policymakers arguing that global warming is a scientific or policy construct, and that there is politics and power in the definition of this problem (Latour, 2004). In short, it is seems as if policy makers have become critical. Additionally, critical thinkers and social movements – for instance those concerned with climate change – seem to adopt the
problem solving attitude. They try to convince everyone to regard the problem as a fact and to find solutions as quickly as possible.

In a similar vein, Robertson and Dale argue the new status of problem-solving in the changed relation between states and global actors such as the IMF/World Bank, WTO and OECD. According to them, what these actors do is not characterised by problem solving but by problem framing:

(…) The way we see the prescriptions and advice of international organisations is not so much as problem solving contributions, but as problem defining and framing interventions. Essentially, it is through these agencies that states learn what their problems ‘really’ are (Robertson & Dale, 2008, italics in original).

Indeed, Robertson and Dale raise the question why the World Bank’s education strategies, and its explicit attempt to reform education and governance, to frame or shape problems and to construct the world, should not be regarded as a mode of critical theory itself. Thus facing these strategies of problem framing and the problem solving strategies, the classical assumptions of critical theory are clearly challenged. Robertson and Dale (2008) however do not propose getting rid of critical theories, but advocate redefining them, for instance by developing a theory that addresses the following issues: how power and discourses work at the level of problem framing and reality shaping policies and politics; how actors strategically adopt problem solving theories; and how to articulate in more detail one’s framework for social justice. The latter refers to what we called a matter of concern that motivates the critical policy orientation (see introduction and overview of this book). In the words of Robertson and Dale that underlying concern is an engagement “to advance and enable a socially transformative agenda for critical education policy analysis.” Their perspective comes close to the suggestions of scholars we discussed earlier, such as Ozga’s plea for new research communities and Luke’s argument to broaden the evidence used in current evidence policy making.

In the conclusion of this chapter we will return to the now crucial challenge posed by policy makers. At this point we underline the importance of being attentive to the assumptions of the critical orientation and of being especially attentive to its basic concern. In our view, questioning the assumptions of critical policy scholarship should not lead to radical questioning its concern.

AN OVERVIEW OF THEORETICAL HORIZONS AND APPROACHES

This section presents an overview of approaches adopted in studies critically oriented towards politics, power and policies in education: state theory, critical discourse analysis, field theory, governmentality, micro-politics, post-colonial theory, feminist policy analysis, and philosophical analysis. Often these approaches are combined, but we think it is helpful to discuss them separately. For a good understanding, it is necessary to first sketch the general theoretical horizons the approaches have sprung from.
a) Mapping horizons

We will start with a short overview of the main frameworks or paradigms in social theory: functional, utilitarian, conflict and interactionist theorising (Turner, 1991; Turner & Mitchell, 1977, pp.22ff). The paradigms will be complemented by a short sketch of critical theory and post-structuralism.

Functional, utilitarian, conflict and interactionist theorising

The main aim of functional theorising is an analysis of education taking into account the effects on or consequences for society. For example, education is regarded as a source of social integration or as having a selection and allocation function. Utilitarian theorising starts from the assumption that actors have clear hierarchies of values (for desired resources), and calculate what is needed (that is, costs) in order to secure their highly valued preferences. This economically oriented perspective analyses education in terms of ‘rate of return on investment in education’ in line with Human Capital Theory or in terms of ‘decision making processes in the educational market’ (school choice, school vouchers) in line with Public Choice Theory.

The two traditions that actually form the horizon for a lot of critical policy studies are conflict and interactionist theorising.

Conflict theorising starts from the assumption that the unequal distribution of resources in society fosters a particular understanding of education, its organisation and development. There are many different versions here, although a broad distinction between Marxian-inspired and Weberian-inspired conflict theories is useful in order to grasp their scope.

Marxian-inspired theories focus on how schools through ideology reproduce class relations and the unequal distribution of material resources. In line with the work of Althusser (1971), scholars focus on the reproductive role played by the “superstructure” that consists of a “political-legal repressive apparatus” and an “ideological state apparatus.” In line with Gramsci (1971) there is a focus on the role of ideology or cultural ideas and symbols, of intellectuals in creating and reproducing hegemony at the cultural level, and of teachers reproducing this hegemony in classrooms. In both lines of elaboration, education and the state are regarded as arenas for ideological struggle that are ultimately rooted in the material relations of production or the struggle around the distribution of material resources.

The Weberian-inspired conflict theories also focus on the role of education and the state in reproducing inequality, yet their main focus is on the formation and role of status groups in reproduction mechanisms. These studies broaden the class concept and concentrate on the status conflicts surrounding honour, prestige and cultural capital. The work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1964/1979, 1970/1977) has been influential here. In short, their work focuses on the role of education in producing and reproducing different kinds of capital: economic capital (money, objects), social capital (positions, affiliations), cultural capital (skills, tastes, preferences) and symbolic capital (legitimating codes). The assumption is that
capital is unequally distributed and that a social class is constituted based on the total amount of capital and on the configuration of the different kinds of capital. Each class has its own “culture” or “habitus”, that is, “the largely unconscious perceptions, choices, preferences, and behaviours of members within a given level and configuration of economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital” (Turner & Mitchell, 1977, p. 26). Education, and in particular educational credentials, play an important role in the production of types of capital, but also in the reproduction of inequality because mediation occurs through the “habitus” (received in the family, peer group) and the school structure (valuing particular amounts/kinds/configurations of capital). In sum, Weberian inspired theories allow a focus on the role of elite groups in the unequal distribution of resources, chances, and skills.

Interactionist modes of theorising focus on face-to-face interactions in schools and classrooms, and on how meaning is constituted in these local contexts. In the literature, four distinct versions of interactionist theory are distinguished (Turner, 1991). Symbolic interactionist theories and role theories concentrate on the self-conception of teachers and students, the definition of the situation, the playing of roles and the production and maintainances of definitions of the situation (e.g. Hargreaves). Dramaturgical interactionism, in line with Goffman, studies the context of interactions by focusing on presentations of self, lines of conduct, strategies, rituals, and the framing of the situation. Interactionist structuralism, in line with Bernstein, pays attention to how linguistic codes in schools lead to different forms of socialisation (for example, the restricted code of lower-class students). Finally, interactionist phenomenology reveals that what is taken for granted, and what is supposed to be an objective reality, is actually produced in interaction and hence socially constructed. Research on the assumptions of the superiority of abstract knowledge to everyday knowledge (Young) and the implicit use of class labels in evaluating students (Keddie) are examples.

Although not really to be situated at the same level of the previous modes of theorising (functional, utilitarian, conflict, interactionist), it is important to mention on the one hand critical theory (in line with the Frankfurt School) and on the other hand post-structuralism (Honneth, 2006; Peters, 1996; Humes & Bryce, 2003).

Critical theory

Critical theory is regarded as an influential attempt to develop Marxist thought. It originated at the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research during the 1930s through the work of Horkheimer, Marcuse, and Adorno, and later Habermas and Honneth. The aim of Horkheimer was to integrate all kinds of empirical social research and philosophical thought into a general materialistic theory of society. For Horkheimer, the following question should orient all research at the institute in Frankfurt: “How do the psychic mechanisms come about which make it possible for tensions between social classes, which are forced to become conflicts because of the economic situation, to remain latent?” (Horkheimer in Honneth, 2006, p. 242) Underpinning this program for social empirical research was a belief in changing social relations and social progress by means of political revolutions.
Later versions of critical theory, for instance in line with Adorno and the description of society as a “totally administered society”, noticed a negative model of development, and thus no longer assumed social progress and the potential of political change.

From the 1960s onwards, the work of Habermas gave a new impetus to critical theory. In his discussion with Marxism, Habermas stresses the importance of language and particularly its role as a medium for understanding, and hence as playing a major role in social reproduction. Later on, Habermas (1981) develops his theory of the rationality of communicative action. In this theory, he draws attention to the emancipatory potential of communication based on mutual understanding, in contrast to the colonising effects of strategic and instrumental rationalities (mediated through power, money, efficiency calculation). The Habermasian version of critical theory assumes that modernity is an “unfinished project,” and his support of social democratic policies contributes to the further development of an straightforward orientation to education policy. It should also be noted that Habermas’ critical reading of the so-called postmodernists, including for instance Foucault and Derrida, has been influential. Specifically his sharp attack on what he calls the “crypto-normativity” and “ethical relativism” of the “young conservatives” was picked up by critical policy scholars (Habermas, 1985). From the side of the so-called postmodernists, the ‘modernist’ Habermas however was criticised for imposing universalism. We will return to this debate after introducing the term post-structuralism.

Post-structuralism

Although the term post-structuralism is loaded with negative connotations, and although most authors given the label post-structuralist did not appreciate the label, we can briefly outline some of the topics discussed under this banner (cf. Gottweis, 2004).

Firstly, post-structuralists share a focus on language. This focus however is beyond a structuralist conception of language on the one hand and beyond a representational and intentional conception on the other hand. In line with Ferdinand de Saussure, the linguistic structuralists analyse language, society and culture as a closed system of signs and conventions, and examine language use within specific social contexts. Post-structuralists, instead, analyse the production and change of meaning in how language works, for example, in terms of text working on text, or the assemblage of discursive formations. Language and text are not analysed in relation to the speaker/writer (and his/her intentions), neither is it conceived of in relation to a reality it wants to represent. Instead, the focus is on the use of language and on the interpretations by the readers. However, and in contrast to Habermas, attention is not placed on the pragmatic and linguistic dimension of language, on the validity claims in argumentative discourse and on the implied social bonds. Instead, the French theorists commonly referred as post-structuralists conceive language in terms of events, discursive practices and formations (Foucault, 1969), intertextuality and the infinite play of signifiers (Derrida, 1961),
or language games and narratives (Lyotard, 1979; 1983). An important assumption is that the social order is at once a discursive order, and that this order is not to be analysed in structural or binary (linguistic or materialistic) models and neither is it to be analysed in relation to an objectivity or given outside.

This shift towards language has put the notion ‘discourse’ in the centre of many sociological disciplines, including those of education theory and sociology of education (Codd, 1988; Ball, 1994b). For example, policy text is analysed as part of discourses that frame issues in a particular way as policy problems by using specific concepts, words, and ways of arguing, and hence constituting a specific arena within which to propose and discuss solutions. The focus is on the power of language, and in a Foucauldian framework, on how knowledge (in terms of savoir or general forms of knowing) and power (in terms of a complex of forces or steering mechanisms) are linked up in discourses (Foucault, 1982).

Secondly, and in line with the particular conception of language, there is no focus on the underlying structures or powerful actors in order to explain or describe the social fabric and education policy. In line with Foucault, the focus is on the historically contingent formation of assemblages and regimes, and not, as in conflict and structural theories, on how elite groups or material conditions are leading to a particular discourse, and how this discourse has an ideological or hegemonic effect. It is important however to keep in mind that the popular term ‘discourse’ is used in several theories.

In line with Foucault (1969, 1972), discourse refers to a discursive formation or order, that is, the historically shaped rules and practices for things to be said and known (and things not to be said and known). In 1970s, Foucault suggests analysing regimes of power-knowledge by focusing on how discourses work and how related forms of power work (Foucault, 1971, 1975, 1976). However, in Habermasian critical theory discourse is used in a different way. In Habermas’ attempt to develop a discourse ethics the term refers to the practice of argumentative communication and the assumptions of validity within communicative reasoning (Habermas, 1981). Combining Foucauldian insights and conflict theories, Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2003) as one of the founders of critical discourse analysis (CDA) uses the term discourse to analyse how language shapes social practices and how these social practices in turn influence discourses (see further below). Here, the focus is on the ideological role of discourse, that is, the way language plays a major role in power struggles. Thus although there seems to be a common focus on the social and political dimension of language, it is important to keep in mind that the fashionable term discourse is often used in different ways and with highly diverging theoretical assumptions.

Thirdly, within post-structuralist thinking, there is on the one hand a critical reading of so-called modern social and political theories and on the other hand the development of an alternative critical scholarly position. Alongside the work of Foucault and Derrida strong criticism of deterministic and foundational reasoning in social, historical, and educational theory emerged. What is criticised is the assumption that specific conditions (for instance, unequal distribution of material resources), particular people or groups (for instance, policy makers or classes) or
agencies (for instance, the state) determine social and cultural life, power and state structures and even people’s subjectivity (Peters, 2001; Olssen et al., 2004). In line with Foucault and Derrida, there is a spatial focus on discursive events, contingent assemblages, and dispersed practices. However, there is not only a discussion at a theoretical, epistemological and methodological level between anti-foundationalist thinkers and so-called modernist scholars. What complicates things is that each camp turns the other into a research object itself.

Foundational and deterministic social thought and the assumption of a single cause or an underlying structure/subject is criticised itself for being part of a discursive formation with power effects (Blake et al., 1998; Usher & Edwards, 1994; Popkewitz & Brennen, 1998; Simons et al., 2005). The belief in foundations, underlying modern critical theory, is regarded itself as an effect of power relations. From the other camp, post-structuralists are blamed for justifying the existing power constellations, due to their ignorance of the role of actors and underlying material conditions and/or because they lack a normative point of view outside power to be able to judge hegemonic forms of power (see Habermas, 1985; Zippin, 1998; Olssen, 1999). This discussion is also repeated at the level of critical positions. From the perspective of Marxist conflict theory or critical theory, the critical potential of the historicising and de-naturalising analysis in line with Foucault is regarded as limited. Indicating that things are problematic or contingent but not explaining why they are problematic or need to change, or without offering explicit norms for social or political change, is regarded as relativistic and politically flawed or even dangerous (Habermas, 1985). Furthermore, the post-structural line of analysis is unmasked as being paradoxical for it explains how subjects and agents are constituted but assumes at the same time that there is still room for change. However, from the position of the post-structuralists, the use of norms is regarded as a foundational way of reasoning, leading to speaking for others and continuing the existence of power formations. Additionally, the focus on the classic institutions of power (such as The State, The School, The Economy) is criticised for not being able to describe how power actually works locally, and how discourses are interwoven with power mechanisms (Foucault, 1982). Furthermore, the act of showing that things can be changed and focusing on the contingency of what is assumed to be universal is regarded as a critical position in its own right, and it is stressed that focusing on the production of subjects through power is not the same as assuming there is no agency.

In this introduction, we are not going into this discussion in depth. The reason for this is not only the limited space available. One of the reasons for not taking up this debate again is that we think the debate no longer ‘colonises’ the current research of scholars. The ‘discursive arena’ of policy research has changed. As mentioned throughout the introduction, there seem to be indications that this debate is no longer omnipresent, or at least that there is a shift from the theoretical and epistemological discussions of the 1990s to discussions mainly driven by new social and political developments. While the current discussions do not ignore theoretical interests, underlying them is a commitment to education and society. In other words, and drawing on the language of Latour (2004), there are indications of
a shift from discussions around matters of fact (that divide and isolate scholars) to
discussions on matters of concern that bring people together and generate ‘public
interest’.

The previous observation does not mean however there is a convergence or
homogenisation of theoretical approaches in policy research. The next section will
show that several different approaches are adopted.

b) Mapping approaches

The following overview of approaches does not attempt to be exhaustive and does not
attempt to discuss each selected approach in detail. Despite the risk of
oversimplification, we do think a brief outline is helpful as an introduction to the
current orientations towards policy.

Cultural political theory

An influential background for critical education policy studies is state theory, and
particularly the theoretical focus on the role and functions of the state in capitalist
importance is the work of Bob Jessop (2002, 2007) and his attempt to develop a
“cultural political economy”, that is, an attempt to understand the dynamics of
capitalist societies by attending to the constitutive role of cultural production
through economic and political imaginaries. In this respect, he criticises a
deterministic analysis of the role and function of the state by combining system
theories (and the focus on structures) and conflict theories (and the focus on
cultural conflict and strategy). Jessop (2000a) suggests analysing the role of the
state along four dimensions.

Firstly, in view of the need for capital accumulation, Jessop proposes to analyse
the state’s role in economic policy. Secondly, the state’s role in social policy is
linked up with social reproduction, and the reproduction of labour forces. Thirdly,
capitalist societies are characterised by the scalar organisation of both policies in
order to guarantee relatively stable periods of accumulation. Here, “spatio-temporal
fixes” strategically allocate tasks to specific scales (local, national, regional…) and
to specific periods in order to settle contradictions and dilemmas of capital
accumulation in capitalist societies (such as market failures). Finally, the necessity
of regulation in capital relations, the emerging contradictions and dilemmas in
accumulation and the temporal fixation of these problems open up space for
governance (ongoing management, muddling through or crisis management). This
governance or coordination can take the form of coordination through imperative,
by the state, a more anarchist coordination by the market, or a self-organising
coordination through networks. The focus on the cultural or semiotic level in what
Jessop calls a “strategic-relational approach” enables him to analyse how within a
specific system particular identities, actors and strategies are produced and
privileged, and how these strategies are actually deployed by actors.
Relying on this framework, scholars have developed a particular perspective to analyse education and the governance of education within local and global political economies (see the contributions of Dale, Robertson, Fahey et al.). Within the “cultural political theory of education”, education is approached as a major site for cultural and social reproduction, and hence constituted in relation to specific local, national, regional, international policy settlements and modes of regulation. In addition, education policy can be approached at the level of economic and political imaginaries, and related to forms of state coordination. In order to understand education policy in a broad sense, one can also look at the interconnection of state coordination with market and network coordination, as well as how the coordination of matters related to education is divided over different scales.

Finally, and related to the critical agenda, this approach allows a focus on the contradictions in and around education and its governance, and shows how the contradictions and preferred strategies reveal power patterns and social inequalities. Jessop (2000b) describes, for example, how knowledge within the European knowledge economy is regarded as both a private and public good, leading to highly contradictory policies.

Critical discourse analysis

As mentioned earlier, the critical study of education policy often addresses policy as discourse although the term discourse is used within many approaches. Except for a stricter Foucauldian usage which we will discuss later, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Fairclough is influential (Codd, 1988; Ball, 1994b; Janks, 1997; Edwards & Nicoll, 2001; Luke, 1997, 2002; Gewirtz et al., 2004; Taylor, 2004). The point of departure for Fairclough is to analyse the actual language used in texts and to combine this analysis with a focus on discursive and social practices within which the actual text plays a role.

In seeing language as discourse and as social practice, one is committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationship between texts, processes, and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures (Fairclough, 1989, p. 26).

All text thus belongs to a discursive practice or order of discourse, that is, a specific way of speaking and including distinctive modes of representing, genres and styles. The discursive is argued to be dialectically linked up with social practices. For example, within school institutions texts could be analysed as part of an instructional-psychological and managerial order of discourse, and as actually influencing social relations in schools, while the school is at the same time conditioning the text and discourses.

In view of these assumptions, Fairclough suggests three levels of analysis: the analysis of text, the analysis of the order of discourse and the analysis of social practices. At the level of discourse, language plays an ideological role, that is:
“(…) the struggle over language can manifest itself as a struggle between ideologically diverse discourse types” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 90). Social struggles are linked up with struggles over language and critical discourse analysis can reveal how practices are ideologically maintained, strengthened or resisted. Important here, and clearly related to the approach of Jessop, is the assumption that texts are “overdetermined” by other social elements. As a result, the linguistic analysis of texts immediately leads to the discussion of issues related to social relations and institutions (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer, 2004). However, the term overdetermination does not imply that the analysis of text can be displaced by a form of social analysis.

Relying upon this framework, scholars oriented towards education policy can look at policy texts as struggles over language and as dialectically linked to a particular organisation of society (see the contributions of Seddon, Nicoll, Lingard & Rawolle, Bradford & Hey). We will list some of these perspectives.

Firstly, the analysis of policy at the level of discourse enables scholars to focus on dominant discourse types (managerialism for example) within policy texts, and on how realities and identities, and writer and reader positions are being constituted. In line with Fairclough, one can focus on how discursive operations (such as marketisation), attempt to address the readers as individual persons (synthetic personalisation) and how dominant discourses and positions exclude, marginalise or silence others.

Secondly, critical discourse analysis allows a combination of detailed textual analysis at the level of policy texts with an analysis of the broader economic and political context and institutions (Luke, 1997). Here, scholars can focus on the emergence of discourses (for instance, the knowledge-based economy), how these discourses become hegemonic, how they are recontextualised (that is, starting to play a role in new fields) and finally, how they are operationalised (that is, how they shift from mere imaginaries to actually transforming social reality and being materialised) (Fairclough, 2005).

Thirdly, critical discourse analysis can include a specific interest in the rhetoric of policy, and specifically in how discourses are ‘technologised’ (based on the technical use of forms of communication) in view of influencing social practices by persuasion. The use of concepts, images and phrases in policy talk, and the included genres and styles, can be analysed in terms of explicit strategies or spin aimed at ideologically influencing readers and listeners.

Leaving behind some of the critical theory assumptions of Fairclough, a further step is to focus radically on what language does, without assuming a distinction between truth and rhetoric/ideology, argument and persuasion, language and reality. This implies that a scholar does not position himself as someone who reveals the truth, but as someone who launches so to speak a counter-language or counter-rhetoric (see contribution of Nicoll).

Finally, critical discourse analysis can include different critical attitudes towards policy and society. Fairclough (2005) suggests distinguishing between three forms of critique that are relevant to critical discourse analysis: “Whereas ideological critique focuses on the effects of semiosis on social relations of power, and
rhetorical critique on persuasion (including ‘manipulation’) in individual texts or talk, what we might call ‘strategic critique’ focuses on how semiosis figures within the strategies pursued by groups of social agents to change societies in particular directions.” Perhaps a fourth form of critique can be added here. In line with acknowledging the rhetoric within each form of discourse, and thus including one’s own discourse as a researcher, there is room for a ‘tactical critique’: explicitly launching a counter-discourse as critical policy scholar.

Policy field analysis

The work of Bourdieu has played a major role in sociology of education for a long time. The use of his work in critical education policy scholarship is relatively recent. This is partly related to a shift in his thinking and his political activism during the 1990s. While his former work is mainly focusing on the straightforward reproduction of societal inequality through schooling, in his latter work Bourdieu focuses more explicitly on the role of politics and policy and on the impact of actors in maintaining or being able to change social reproduction (van Zanten, 2005). This openness to change is related to his critical analysis of globalisation policy, the dominant role of economic neo-liberalism herein, and the opportunities to inaugurate counter-movements.

Bourdieu’s political optimism is based on the idea of “reflexive sociology” or “sociology of the sociology”, that is, a sociology that adopts a “self-socio-analysis” of the intellectual project in view of mutually enriching the theoretical and empirical through a kind of “philosophical fieldwork” (Bourdieu, 2004/2007). Bourdieu develops the idea of the “collective intellectual” as an elaboration of this approach (Bourdieu, 1997/2008, pp. 292–293). The collective intellectual seeks to create new forms of collaboration among researchers and between the field of research and the field of practice, and she attempts to bridge the field of critical research and politics. As a collective intellectual himself, Bourdieu attempts to develop the concept of rational utopias in conjunction with his idea concerning “the victims of neoliberalism.” Through rational utopias, he supports the transformation of victims to become actors of social change.

Interest is growing in the adoption of the ideas of Bourdieu in elaborating a distinctive approach to education policy as a social field (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004; Lingard et al., 2005b; Rawolle, 2005). Bourdieu defines a social field as follows:

A field is a structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which the various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies (Bourdieu, 1998, pp. 40–41, quoted in Lingard & Rawolle, 2004, p. 365).
From this point of view, different social fields can be distinguished each having their own logic and each seeking to uphold a relative autonomy against intrusion from other fields: the journalistic and artistic fields, the political field and academic fields (Wacquant, 2006). Also policy and education policy in particular can be approached and analysed in terms of a relative autonomous social field, although clearly influenced by and influencing other fields. Within the education policy field, like in all other fields, agents struggle and compete over (cultural, economic, and social) capital and strategise in order to secure their own position and social power. The *habitus* of agents, that is, a “durable, transposable disposition” that functions “as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and action”, informs practice and enacts the structure of the field. The field itself mediates between habitus and practice (Bourdieu, 1980/1990, p. 53). From the perspective of field theory, the aim is to analyse both the structures and relations within fields and the disposition and schemata of perception of the agents who inhabit the fields. This double focus can be regarded as an attempt to reconcile the objective and subjective, structure and agency, objective structures and mental structures or, at a theoretical level, a structural and phenomenological approach.

There are different dimensions to be distinguished in the policy studies that approaches education policy as a field and education as an arena of strategic struggles based on different status positions (see the contributions of Lingard & Rawolle, Lawn & Grek, Seddon, Bradford & Hey, Apple, Suncker, Giroux and Marginson).

At a rather general level, it is possible to elaborate and reframe the distinction between “context of influence”, “context of production” and “context of practice” in the well-known policy process model (Bowe et al., 1992; Ball, 1994b) (see further below). From the viewpoint of fields one could focus on the struggles in the policy field around production, as well as on the influence from other fields and the intrusion of the policy field in other fields. Additionally, and discussing the effects of policies, it is possible to grasp the social logic or the mental structures generated among teachers or students.

Secondly, in studying the constitution of the logic of the education policy field and its transformations, it is interesting to examine specifically “cross-field effects.” One could focus for example on how the journalist field (or media) and the economic field have an effect on the education policy field, or on how the logic and techniques of the economic field transforms the academic field and the field of (higher) education (Lingard & Rawolle, 2004).

Thirdly, field theory can be particularly useful in addressing globalisation policies, especially in terms of the emergence of a “global policy field.” By addressing cross-field effects on different scales and by taking into account different time frameworks, it becomes possible to analyse the conflicts and struggles around education policy (Lingard, 2006, p. 293). Additionally, it is possible to focus on the different strategies adopted by nations based on their respective “national capital” in the global field, and on how the neoliberal logic of globalisation combined with the mediatisation of policy leads to reduced autonomy in the national education policy field.
Finally, the policy orientation inspired by field theory is accompanied by a particular critical ethos. The main critical endeavour is to grasp the struggle over preserving or upholding the existing distribution of capital and the debates over identities and hierarchies. Ultimately, the goal is to picture “symbolic violence”, that is, the imposition of systems of meaning that justify existing structures of inequality. We mentioned earlier that in line with Bourdieu, the critical scholar can develop a stance as collective intellectual and contribute to new social imaginaries.

**Governmentality studies**

As with Bourdieu, the work of Foucault has already played for a rather long period a role in educational research and social and political theory of education. It is impossible to give an overview of all the – philosophical, historical, sociological – uses of Foucault in educational research. Yet, it seems that the teaching of Foucault on “governmentality” during his courses at the Collège de France in 1977-1978 and 1978-1979 has given a new impetus to critical education policy studies. Within the scope of this introduction we are necessarily limiting ourselves to an exploration of the relevance of the study of governmentality in the critical study of education policy. Governmentality is a neologism referring to a perspective on the assembly of particular rationalities and forms of thought (‘mentalities’) with specific technologies and strategies to govern (Dean 1999; for a slightly different interpretation see Sennelart, 2004). ‘To govern’ here is understood in a very broad sense: the structuring, guiding or shaping of people’s behaviour in very different contexts and in very different areas (including the structuring or shaping of human beings as subjects).

We will picture very shortly Foucault’s own account of forms of governmentality from the seventeenth century onwards until the emergence of neoliberal governmental rationalities in the second part of the twentieth century. Contrary to the previous approaches this historical overview is needed in order to be able to discuss the perspective on governmentality from a more analytical viewpoint and in order to give a short overview of the governmentality orientation towards education policy.

A main characteristic of the birth of the modern nation state, according to Foucault (1981, 1978), is not the “etatisation of society” but the “governmentalisation of the state.” This means that he conceives the state as a complex of centralizing governing relationships and mechanisms aimed at steering people (both as individuals and population). As a result, the birth of the modern state as a “governmental state” implies the emergence of a particular rationalisation of the role of the state, its tasks and responsibilities as well as its objectives and the entities to be governed. Furthermore, Foucault (2004a/b) elaborates in detail how the governmental state and its rationalities and mentalities have continually transformed throughout history. Firstly, a governmentalisation in the name of state reason in the early modern period. This is followed in the modern era by processes of governmentalisation in the name of individual freedom and security, and finding its intellectual rationalisation in the reflections on political economy. Next, he describes the governmentalisation in the name of the social in the
twentieth century and culminating in the ‘social state’. Foucault (2004a) notices a new crisis in the problematic of how to govern during the second part of the twentieth century, which inaugurated a new phase in the governmentalisation of the state. Meanwhile many scholars (Gordon 1991, Rose 1999, Dean 1999, Olssen et al. 2004, Simons, 2007) have elaborated on this. Their findings indicate that the role of the state is no longer rationalised as a central agency of government that should intervene in society in the name of the social in order to align individual freedom and social welfare (Rose 1996). Instead, it is argued that the state today is increasingly regarded as a managerial agency that should enable an entrepreneurial type of freedom through for example marketisation, investment in human capital and in collaboration with other agencies of governance (both local and global, public and private) (Olssen & Peters, 2005).

Drawing upon Foucault’s historical accounts of governmentality, scholars have elaborated the term governmentality into an analytical perspective enabling investigation of past and current forms of government. From a Foucauldian perspective, government is to be regarded as a form of “conduct of conduct” (Foucault 1982, p. 237) or a more or less calculated and rational attempt to direct human conduct by the application of particular technical means. As Dean (1999, p. 23) explains, an “analytics of government (…) takes as its central concern how we govern and are governed within different regimes, and the conditions under which such regimes emerge, continue to operate and are transformed.” The assemblage and operation of these regimes of government can be analysed by focusing on three related dimensions: the governmental rationality or program at stake, the techne of government being used, and the type of governable subject involved (Foucault 1978a/b). Governmentality studies are not aimed at explaining the particular agency and underlying motives of the actors in government. The focus of an analytics is, as explained by Rose (1999, p. 21), the space of thought and action for a particular self-government or conduct to emerge and hence the “conditions of possibility and intelligibility for certain ways of seeking to act upon the conduct of others, or oneself, to achieve certain ends.”

There are several adoptions of the perspective on governmentality within the study of education (Popkewitz & Brennan, 1998; Weber & Maurer, 2006; Masschelein et al, 2007; Fejes & Nicoll, 2008) and several components in the elaboration of the governmentality orientation towards education policies can be distinguished (see the contributions of Fejes, Pongratz, Popkewitz, Fendler, Foss Lindblad & Lindblad, Olssen, Ball, Wain).

At a rather general level, and not strictly related to governmentality, Foucauldian concepts and tools have been developed which focus on policy as a social practice and discourse: policy archaeology (and the focus on discursive formations in policy) and policy genealogy (and the focus on implied power relations, changes in discursive formations and the resulting exclusions) (Schurich, 1994; Gale, 2001). More sociological and historical approaches are developed along these lines, but each is seeking to focus on the cultural politics within education policy and the regulation of schools (Varela, 2001).
Secondly, and more closely related to the governmentality perspective, are the attempts to analyse the governing regime and the conditions of possibility for policy texts, policy problems and solutions, and actors and their self-understanding to emerge. Again, Foucault’s idea of governmentality does not provide a theoretical framework nor fixed methodological guidelines, neither should governmentality be regarded as a domain of practice. Instead, the term is foremost a perspective on governing and being governed. What is assumed is that people are governed in a particular way, and that it is possible to analyse how this government (its rationality or technology) and one’s own role in becoming governable (that is, one’s conduct or self-government) emerged at a particular moment in time (Simons & Masschelein, 2007). As indicated earlier, the perspective of governmentality analyses the interrelation of three components. One can focus on the governmental rationality, that is, the mode of reasoning about how and why government takes place, the implied grid of visibility for policy problems, solutions and entities to be governed to appear, and the mode of justifying authority and presenting the $\textit{telos}$ of government. Additionally, one can focus on the $\textit{tekhnē}$ of government. This encompasses the instruments, procedures, techniques and tools that are combined and used in order to accomplish the governmental objectives. Finally, there can be a focus on the side of the governed, that is, the way the subjectivity of those who are governed (for instance, teachers, but also schools) is made up. The assumption is that in order for people and organisations to be governable they have to come to understand themselves in a particular way, to experience particular issues as relevant and to govern themselves and ‘practice their freedom’ accordingly.

Thirdly, we can mention two further extensions in critical studies on education policy relying on the governmentality perspective: the inclusion of technologies of the self and the focus on processes of governmentalisation both globally and locally. While Foucault seeks to relate in governmentality both ‘political technologies’ (to steer people and regulate society) and ‘technologies of the self’ (adopted by people to constitute oneself as a subject and to govern oneself accordingly), the primary focus in education policy research has been on political technologies. Meanwhile, there is an interest to examine in more detail how ‘conduct’ takes shape at the local level, that is, through what kind of technologies of the self people work upon the self and transform themselves (as teacher for instance) into governable subjects. In terms of Hacking (2004), this should not be regarded as an attempt to link the macro and micro level, but to combine “the abstract” and “the concrete”, and their enactment. The perspective of governmentality additionally seeks to open up the research domain by addressing processes of governmentalisation both locally (e.g. public-private partnerships at regional and local levels) and globally (e.g. transnational organisations) (Perry & Maurer, 2003; Ong & Collier, 2004; Lamer & Walters, 2004). Instead of addressing current developments in Europe, for instance, in terms of the “etatisation of Europe” there are attempts to describe the “governmentalisation of Europe” and the role of education therein (Masschelein and Simons, 2003; Walters & Haahr, 2005). Closely related to the extension of the perspective of governmentality to ‘global technologies’ and ‘technologies of the self’, the field of study also seeks to develop its
methodological apparatus. It wants to go beyond discourse analysis and includes methods from critical anthropology and critical discourse analysis.

Finally, the governmentality-inspired orientation in education policy is motivated by a particular critical attitude. Foucault (1982, pp. 231–232) used the concept “(historical) ontology of the present” in order to describe in a general way the critical attitude underlying his research, and explains this can be understood as a critical concern or care for the present (Foucault 1980, p. 108, cf. Rajchman 1991, p. 141). The aim is to draw precise attention to what is familiar today and to what is often invisible due to this familiarity (Foucault 1978a, pp. 540–541). What is needed to achieve this aim is a kind of “cartography” (Deleuze 1986) that “maps” (Flynn 1994) the present or, as Rose (1999, p. 57) puts it, an “empiricism of the surface” focusing on what is said and what allows it to be said. Thus what is at stake, according to Rose (1999, p. 20) is “introducing a critical attitude towards those things that are given to our present experience as if they were timeless, natural, unquestionable” and “to enhance the contestability of regimes” that seek to govern us. Foucault indeed explains that critique is “the art of not being governed like that and at that cost” (Foucault, 2007/1978, p. 45), and hence, the study of processes of governmentalisation if often motivated by an ethos of “de-governmentalisation” (Gros, 2001, pp. 520–523).

Micropolitics, feminist theory, postcolonial theory and philosophical analysis

Each of the following approaches deserves a more detailed elaboration, but because they are often linked up with the previously discussed approaches we think a limited elaboration is justified.

The micropolitical approach relies on interactionist assumptions and conflict theory, and is often combined with biographic research and critical ethnographic approaches (Young, 1999). The micropolitical approach plays a major role in a critical orientation towards how power actually works in schools, as well as towards the problematic of policy implementation (see the contribution of Kelchtermans). Blase (1991, pp. 1–2) defines micropolitics as follows:

Micropolitics is about power and how people use it to influence and protect themselves. It is about conflict and how people compete with each other to get what they want. It is about cooperation and how people build support among themselves to achieve their ends.

Instead of describing schools in structuralist or functionalist ways, this approach focuses on the school as an “arena of struggle”, and on how schools are built through the interactions of people (Ball, 1987). Drawing upon this perspective, it is also possible to describe the development of “micropolitics at the state level”, that is, how the arena works at the level of politicians, state officials and other representatives (Lingard, 1995). Additionally, the micropolitical approach is adopted to understand how education policy is filtered through the micropolitics of schools, and thus questioning rationalist and instrumental assumptions of policy making and policy makers (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2002).
Another important approach is feminist theory and post-colonial theory, and particularly their orientation towards education policy. Davies (1997) distinguishes the following versions of feminism: liberal feminism (focusing on issues of equal rights and access), radical feminism (questioning maleness and the male symbolic and cultural order), socialist feminism (focusing on the relation between capitalist societies, patriarchal structures and ideologies), and feminist poststructuralism (analysing male/female and gender issues through discourse). Socialist and poststructuralist feminist theories especially play a role in critical education policy studies (cf. Ferguson, 1984; Ozga & Gewirtz, 1994). These theories offer tools to critically examine how inequality in capitalist structures is a gendered inequality, and how policy texts actually reproduce gender inequality through the words, images and examples that are used. Another influential account is Marshall’s (2000, p. 128) “feminist critical policy analysis”:

(…) Assuming that hegemonic policy arenas are managed and controlled primarily by, and for, white males, defines how women’s needs and perspectives are marginalised, so policy analysis must be pursued differently.

In view of this, Marshall suggests focusing on the feminist, gender and race philosophies that are part of policies, in order to analyse the policy discourses and their ideological function, and particularly on the counter-narratives and counter-discourses that emerge. From a Foucauldian perspective, Pillow (1997, p. 146; 2003) coins the term “feminist genealogy” and elaborates an approach that “focuses specific attention upon the discursively structured, raced, gendered and sexed body.” Furthermore, she claims that “feminist genealogy locates the work of genealogy as critique within the body, a methodology that embodies policy analysis” (ibid., p. 147). Often linked up with race and gender theories is the post-colonial perspective, summarised by Rizvi (2004, p. 160) as follows:

(…) A point of view of knowledges developed outside the dominant hegemonic orientation of the West. It is a perspective concerned with developing a set of guiding principles of political practice morally committed to identifying and transforming the conditions of exploitation in which large sections of the world’s populations live out their daily lives.

Last but not least, it is important to explore the philosophical analysis of education policy. From the viewpoint of more empirically orientated approaches, philosophical analysis and reflection is often regarded as mere commentary. Because it can be an approach in its own right, it is worth mentioning two types of philosophical analysis.

Firstly, policy research can involve a hermeneutical approach. Hermeneutics is the philosophical tradition that regards understanding and interpretation as major activities in social life (Ödman & Kerdeman, 1997). In line with Gadamer (1960), this means that the scholar attempts to grasp the meaning of the text (and text can include artefacts and experiences) by taking into account the context in which the text emerged as well as the scholar’s own cultural background and pre-understanding. The act of interpretation implies that the meaning of something
only reveals itself in relation to the culture or tradition in which it emerges. Understanding takes shape in a kind of circular tension between the familiar and the strange, and the past and the future, with a view on grasping the deep assumptions of social life. The guiding principle here is the so-called ‘hermeneutical circle’; the parts of the text need to be related to the whole to gain meaning, but the whole only reveals itself through the parts. An example of a hermeneutical approach to policy making, combined with a conceptual Wittgensteinian focus on rule-following, is the focus on the “politics of interpretation” (Peters & Marshall, 1996). The approach suggests conceptually analysing the definition of a policy problem in relation to the rules of the context in which it emerged, to gradually try to understand the deeper assumptions and values implied in these rules, and to evaluate them in view of emancipatory interests.

Secondly, philosophical analysis of education policy can take the form of policy deconstruction. The term deconstruction today seems to cover almost all so-called post-modern French theory. Here, we use the term however in a specific way, that is, in line with the work of Derrida (1961/1967, 1967). While hermeneutics assumes the possibility of the understanding of the meaning of a text, deconstruction is a kind of ‘strategic device’ that assumes the text is an endless play of signifiers (and that meaning consists in what Derrida refers to as difference). Understanding in this respect can only result from the act of deconstruction itself – there is no understanding without translation, interpretation, or negotiation. What is exposed through deconstruction are the texts’ assumptions regarding (metaphysical) presence and internal logics. In sum, and to put it very broadly, deconstruction reveals that taken for granted concepts, objects and distinctions exist in language and receive their meaning through language, and hence, can not be taken in their pure or given form. Policy deconstruction thus involves a reading of policy texts by revealing how accepted concepts and arguments work through contradictions and silences. In line with Edwards (see his contribution in this book), deconstructive reading should be regarded at once as a form of re-writing in the margins. Deconstruction does not aim at revealing the truth behind the (policy) text, but is the event where concepts, arguments and words in policy texts lose their evidence through adding comments in the margins.

AN OVERVIEW OF CLASSIFICATIONS AND OTHER TOOLS

In order to develop some further familiarity with critical education policy studies, we think it is useful to list some of the classifications and analytical or heuristic tools that have been and are being used. Some of these tools are the operationalisation of approaches discussed in the previous section. The listing is necessarily limited.
a) Historical classifications and typologies

Historical ideal types
Firstly, we will discuss an example of a historical classification that is based on a country’s political context (Neave, 1995; Wielmans & Roth-van der Werf, 1997). The rationale behind this (state-centred) classification is that education policy can be described with regard to the degree of centralisation/decentralisation. It is assumed that within each country there have been discussions concerning to what extent central government controls and organises education, or whether control and organisation is in the hands of lower levels of government and/or private organisations. Based on this rationale, and comparing states within the European context, the authors distinguish three historical models or ideal types: the centralising, Jacobin state, the central state and diversity of initiatives, and the non-interventionist, facilitating state.

The main feature of the first historical type is the central control of the state with regard to education (and issues related to structure, curriculum, and employment…) and with a view to safeguarding ideological neutrality. The policy context in France and Sweden is a fine example of this. In view of social equality, the state wants to bring about a kind of uniformity and installs several centralised control mechanisms to monitor uniformity and equality. The second type is characterised by a strong central state control over curriculum, teachers and structure as well, however in collaboration and agreement with lower levels of government and/or private agencies. The underlying idea, exemplified in countries like Belgium and the Netherlands, is that the school system should reflect the value pluralism and specifically reflect the diversity of ethical and religious convictions. The non-interventionist facilitating state model is characterised by a minimal centralised intervention, and governance is mainly about facilitation and looking for collaboration with local authorities. The former situation in the UK is traditionally regarded as an example of this ‘bottom up’ philosophy that takes into account and promotes educational diversity.

As ideal types that mainly address the European context, these models have limited analytical value in a study of the current state of affairs. However, they still promote understanding of the historical roots of current developments in education policy within different countries. For instance, it is illuminating to take into account the French historical context of centralisation and uniformisation in order to understand current reactions related to managerial tendencies. Additionally, these models remain instructive in describing how different traditions in education policy are influenced by the arrival of (travelling) ‘globalisation policies’, the emergence of ‘competition states’, new forms of decentralisation/deregulation, and by new forms of centralisation or ‘remote control’ (Weiler, 1990; Lauglo, 1995; Neave, 1998; Ball, 1998; Ozga & Jones, 2006; for an approach towards “decentralised centralism”, see Karlsen, 2000). The classifications thus help us to remain attentive to national political and cultural differences in framing policy challenges (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2007).
Education policy periodisation

The second example is a historical classification as well, however it focuses not on the political context but on the general characteristics of education policy (Idenburg, 1971; Coombs, 1970, p. 20ff; Wielemans & Roth-van der Werf, 1997). Addressing the modern state (and particularly in Europe), this classification distinguishes between three periods in education policy. The period before the Second World War is described as a period of distributive-allocative education politics. In the relatively static industrialised societies, where the Church monopoly regarding education was broken in most countries, the main objective was to distribute and allocate available resources to organise and fund education, and to take ‘incidental’ policy measures regarding distribution and allocation.

After the Second World War, the need emerged for a more planned education policy, and to face broader challenges in public policy and social reform. This period is generally referred to as the period of constructive education policy. In this constructive period between the Second World War and the 1980s four phases are distinguished.

Until the end of the 1950s education policy was focused on “reconstruction.” School reconstruction was part of the large social and economic programs aimed at rebuilding society. However, with the challenge of economic progress and demographic change, the need was soon felt to actively intervene in education as part of broader public and economic policy, mainly in order not to slow further growth. The second phase in constructive education policy is the phase of “manpower planning.” Here, education is regarded as “investment expenditure” (instead of merely a “non-productive sector”) and education policy and labour market policy became closely connected. The third phase, from the middle of the 1950s onwards, was characterised by education policy wanting to address the increased demand for education. This “rampant expansion phase” was the result of changes in demographic conditions, caused by new processes of democratisation and parents regarding education as the main route for their children to have a better job and better life. In line with the reorganisation of schools to give access to larger populations, there were proposals for substantial reforms, for instance reforms of the curriculum and the examination system. However, by the end of the 1960s, educational reform became part of broader contestation movements among students, teachers, and labour unions. Characteristic of this fourth phase of constructive education policy – the “innovation phase” – is that education policy makers start to acknowledge the need for permanent structural and organisational reform and for reform at the level of the curriculum and pedagogy. The idea of “rolling reform” arises, and thus the belief that reform is not achieved once and for all, but is a continuous challenge for policy makers.

The four phases of constructive education policy are all part of the development of the welfare state and planned public policy in the second part of the twentieth century. With the crisis of the welfare state and the rise of neoliberal and neoconservative ideologies and politics at the end of the 1970s, a new period emerged: government at a distance. With questioning social planning and public policies in view of the self-organising forces within society and the freedom and
responsibility of individual citizens, the constructive forms of education policy are questioned too. However, and despite some of the \textit{laissez faire} rhetoric, deliberate attempts to steer education through education policy and politics are not disappearing. Closely related to New Public Management, new policies are developed on deregulation, regionalisation, marketisation and consumer choice, as well as on management by objectives and performance accountability. Education policy is no longer about direct steering. However steering at a distance, through targets and new forms of consumer accountability, is steering nevertheless.

This historical classification is illuminative for it helps to place education policy and politics, and the notion of education policy itself in a broader context. But it is important to remain attentive to geographical differences and to new developments. It could be argued for instance that by the end of the 1990s the emergence of a global policy field inaugurates a new period.

\textit{Periodisation based on shifts, ruptures and state forms}

In relation to current developments, a third historical overview can be introduced (Table 1). This overview is more detailed and integrates elements of the previous classifications. In his policy history of English education policy, Ball makes a distinction between four periods “marked off from one another by \textit{ruptures}, related to more general political \textit{shifts} (…) and “(…) each of these ruptures is also associated with changes in the \textit{forms and modalities of the state} (how it is organised and how it works” (Ball, 2008, pp. 55–56, italics in original). Although the overview focuses on the English education policy context, it has heuristic value for understanding education policy in other countries. Particularly interesting is the shift from the neoliberal state to the managerial and competition state. Most of the contributions in this handbook can be regarded indeed as an attempt to reshape the critical policy concern in its confrontation with the neoliberal state and with the transition to the emerging managerial and competition state.

\textit{Types of policy}

A fourth sort of classifications is concerned with listing types of policy (Prunty, 1985, pp. 137–138; Taylor et. al, 1997, pp. 33–35; Parsons, 1995, p. 132; John, 1998, p. 7). These classifications are somewhat reductive and do not take into account contextual differences. However, they are worth mentioning in our exploration of the field of study.

In line with the work of Lowi (1972), a distinction could be made between \textit{distributive}, \textit{redistributive}, \textit{regulatory} and \textit{constituent} policy issues. The first type of policies is about the straightforward allocation of new resources to society at large or to those without specific entitlements. When the policies are targeted, for example when addressing a specific part of the student population (and in view of changing the distribution of existing resources), they are called redistributive. Regulator\textit{y issues involve the regulation and control of activities, such as the control of competition. Constituent policy issues include the setting-up or reorganisation of existing resources.}
Table 1. Ball’s overview of shifts, ruptures and the state (England) (Ball, 2008, p. 57)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shift</th>
<th>Rupture</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870-1944</td>
<td>Break with liberal resistance to state education and welfare</td>
<td>Modern (or interventionist) state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political problems of management of urban working-class migrations and imperial industrial development and trade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-1976</td>
<td>Move to universalist welfare state education – national system locally administrated</td>
<td>Welfare state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postwar economic growth and the expansion of the middle class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976-1997</td>
<td>Break from emerging comprehensive national system and the end of professional autonomy for teachers and schools</td>
<td>Neoliberal state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic crisis, mass unemployment and shift from Fordist to post-Fordist regime of accumulation and the first stage of de-industrialisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-2007</td>
<td>End of a national system, locally administrated</td>
<td>Managerial or competition state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertion of the knowledge economy and new forms of work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In close relation to the previous distinction, and specifically focused on social justice issues, is the distinction between regulatory and deregulatory policies. The former explicitly aim at regulating society (through prohibition, for instance), while the latter are related to minimal government/state intervention, and to the promotion of market forces.

Another distinction is between symbolic and material. Material policies are supported by the provision of resources and financial commitments for securing implementation, while symbolic policies lack these resources. Symbolic policies (such as statements and policy declarations) are often the first step in much broader political programs and/or focused at legitimising particular viewpoints and setting agendas.
Next, the distinction has been made between *rational* and *incremental* approaches towards policy development and decision making. The first approach regards policy making as a rational process based on a clear rational input. The incrementalists claim that policies are rooted within earlier policies, political contexts and practices.

Another classification makes a distinction between *substantive* and *procedural* policies. The former refers to policies that are mainly based on the aims and goals of what governments want to do (that is, general declarations about the desirable state of affairs), and do not address in detail how actors should proceed. Procedural policies are policies that rely on a detailed plan, guidelines for implementation and the allocation of resources.

Finally, policies can be characterised as being more *top-down* or *bottom-up*. Top-down policies are formulated at a central level (for instance the department of education), while bottom-up policies are rooted in existing practises or locally based requests for change.

**Reform technologies**

A final classification we want to mention here discusses the different “policy technologies” that are being used in education reform (Table 2).

*Table 2. The language of reform technologies (Ball, 2008, p. 42)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject positions</th>
<th>Market</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consumers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Manager(s)/Leaders(s)</td>
<td>Appraisee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Managed/workforce</td>
<td>Comparator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entrepreneurs</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Survival</td>
<td>Efficiency/effectiveness</td>
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<td>Income</td>
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<td>Corporate culture</td>
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<td>Values</td>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>‘What works’</td>
<td>The performative worth of individuals</td>
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<td>Institutional interests</td>
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<td>Fabrication</td>
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According to Ball, these technologies “involve the calculated deployment of forms of organisation and procedures, and disciplines or bodies of knowledge, to organise human forces and capabilities into functioning systems” (Ball, 2008, p. 41). Each reform technology involves particular subject positions, draws upon specific disciplines, incentives and procedures, includes a particular set of values and provides a new language. This classification at the level of technologies is helpful to grasp the local mechanisms of policy steering, and to look at policy levels and discourses often not associated with policy making. Additionally, this classification has an analytical value for it can be used for example to describe the operation of these technologies, their linkages and effects in particular contexts.

b) Analytical tools

We will discuss five analytical tools. The first is a set of questions that provides a general orientation for policy analysis. The second is a model of the policy cycle. The third tool is a state-centred model that allows analysis of the division of labour in the governance of education, and a set of questions that operationalises a state-centred approach. And the last analytical tool is a model of policy historiography and archaeology/genealogy. Each of these tools will briefly be outlined.

Questions

Kenway (1990) suggests to focus on education policy from the viewpoint of three kinds of questions: what, how and why questions. Her point of departure is that policies and their texts should be regarded as a ‘temporary settlement’ between different forces in society, the state and related discursive regimes. For Kenway, ‘what’ questions provide a focus on the approach to education that is implied in policies. The approach to education is to be situated at the specific organisation of three message systems: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment (Bernstein, 1971). Secondly, the question ‘how are such proposals organised?’ should be asked. Organisation can refer to issues of funding, staffing, authority and administration. Finally, and at a more explanatory, sociological level, the question ‘why a particular approach and organisation are selected?’ should be answered: why this policy, on whose terms, what are the grounds for justification, whose interests are involved, and how were such interests negotiated? Taylor et al. include two additional questions: “Why now? Why is this particular policy on the agenda at this particular time?” and “What are the consequences?” (Taylor et al., 1997, p. 39). The first additional question opens up a perspective to the broader social and political context within which policy is produced, while the second question addresses the impact of policies, for example regarding issues of social justice.

Contexts, trajectories and cycles

Bowe and Ball (with Gold) (1992) suggest analysing the policy process as a non-linear and interactive trajectory taking into account three contexts: the context of influence (where actors struggle over the construction of policy discourses), the context of policy text production (where policies are represented in texts including
contradictions) and the context(s) of practice (where interpretation and recreation of policy take place). Each context consists of arenas of action in terms of struggle, compromise and ad hocery. The contexts are “loosely coupled” without “one simple direction of flow of information between them” (ibid., p. 26). This trajectory focus is used to look at policy both as a text emerging within a particular context and as a process involving conflict, interests and consensus. By regarding the different contexts in terms of an arena the model acknowledges the politics within policy as text and process.

Ball adds a fourth and fifth context: the context of outcomes and the context of political strategies (Ball, 1994b, p. 26). The former is addressing the impact of policies related to justice, equality and individual freedom, and hence the relation between the first order outcomes (context of practice) and second order outcomes. Analysis of the political strategies is related to what we earlier called critical advocacy and is based on the general evaluation of different outcomes of policies.

In line with Bourdieu, Lingard (2000) elaborates on this heuristic tool by focusing on the role of the global context, that is, the new “global policy field” and “cross-field effects” (e.g. mediatisation of education policy) (cf. Lingard & Rawalle, 2004; Lingard et al., 2005a). In his critic examination of the model, Rizvi stresses the importance of exploring the “context of authority” in policy making. He suggests researchers elaborate how the context of state authority is rooted in national “social imaginaries” and how new neoliberal, global imaginaries reorganise authority and conditions for policy making (Rizvi, 2006). Thus, each of the contexts (influence, production and practice) can be enlarged by including global fields next to national fields, by addressing the relationship between global and national contexts, and by taking into account the new imaginaries within which authority is rooted.

A similar distinction in terms of contexts is made by Taylor et al. (1997), although focusing in more detail on the discursive nature of policy and policy making, the broader context of policy making and the relations between different contexts/levels in the policy process (Taylor, 1997). Regarding policy making as “an arena of struggle over meaning or as ‘the politics of meaning’ (Yeatman, 1990)” a distinction is made between the context, text and consequences (ibid., p. 26). The context of a specific policy includes the study of: economic, social and political factors; influences of pressure groups and social movements; and the study of the historical background including past initiatives upon which new policies are built. The study of the text includes a focus on the politics and related tensions and ambiguities within the policy text, and, for instance, the presence of particular discourses and/or ideologies (on gender for example). Consequences refer to interpretation and implementation of policies at different levels and over different periods of time, and to the politics surrounding the translation of policies.

Division of labour in governance

The third analytical model is derived from a particular version of state theory (Offe, 1984; Dale, 1989, 1994; Jessop, 1990; Dale & Robertson, 2007; Robertson & Dale, 2008). The main concern here is to understand the division of labour in
education governance. The point of departure is that in capitalist societies, the state faces three core problems: “the support of the accumulation process”, “the maintenance of a social context not amenable to the continuation of that accumulation process” and “the legitimation of the system” (Dale, 1994, p. 36; cf. Dale, 1989). In other words: the state is faced with supporting capital accumulation, at the same time protecting society and its order from the impact of the economic process, and offering legitimation for itself and the capitalist system. The assumption is that these core problems are always being translated in “macro-societal expectations” and that this translation occurs in such way that institutional structures and traditions that are nationally available, including education, can be used as responses to the problems. Thus the problems of the state, as well as the problems for which education is suggested to give an answer, are regarded as being constructions based on available structures.

Table 3. Pluri-scalar governance of education (Robertson, Bonal & Dale., 2002, p. 478)

In view of this model, education policy has to be regarded as a kind of settlement regarding contradictory problems that are mediated by particular state structures. In order to analyse these settlements, it is suggested the focus should be on the functional division and coordination of labour in the governance of education (Table 3). Additionally, the scale at which governance tasks are divided as well as the division of labour across sectors should be taken into account (Robertson & Dale, 2008). The notion pluri-scalar governance refers to the combination and coordination of activities, actors/agents and scales through which education is constructed and delivered in national societies (Robertson et al., 2002; Dale, 2005). The essential activities of governing education are funding,
ownership, provision and regulation. The actors or institutions that can play a role in the coordination are the state, the market, the community and the household. The governance can take place at a subnational, national or supranational scale.

This analytical model is clearly concerned with the analysis of the ‘politics of education’ in capitalist societies, and oriented to ‘education politics’ as specific events within governance structures. In contrast, the policy cycle models discussed earlier are concerned with the ‘education politics’ that are part of particular specific policies, and focus on ‘politics of education’ in terms of influences or conditions. We will not engage here in the polarised debate concerning both models during the 1990s – ‘researching into the state’ versus ‘merely applied education politics’, or ‘state-control/centred’ versus ‘policy cycle’ perspectives (Gewirtz, 2002; Halpin & Troyna, 1994; Taylor, 1997). We want to mention here that despite the theoretical and methodological differences, there are several attempts to combine these analytical models and/or to elaborate them (for example, Vidovich, 2002, 2007; Gale, 1999, 2003). Vidovich (2002) for instance suggest modifying the policy cycle model and the focus on micro agency by incorporating a focus on macro constraints, the influence of the global context and by focusing on each of the contexts (influence, production, practice) of the policy cycle at all levels (macro, intermediate and micro).

It is beyond the scope of this introduction to elaborate such adaptations in detail. Instead, we want to outline briefly a specific operationalisation of the state-centred perspective that takes into account policy trajectories and contexts. In their study of the reform under the Labour Government in Australia during the 1990s (and in comparison with other countries as well) Lingard, Knight and Porter (1997, p. 18) list the following questions:

- In what way do these policy developments conceptualise education: as the politics of consumption [individual and social needs] or as the politics of production [with prime importance given to profitability in the economic sector]? (...)
- Where is the emphasis: on increasing human capital in the national interest – or improving the situation of those disadvantaged in the social formation?
- What solution, if any, do policy developments offer towards providing economic constraints upon the provision of educational services: corporate managerialism for a more efficient and effective state – or privatisation which moves provision increasingly out of the state and into the private schools?
- What is the justification for devolution: does it make schooling more effective and democratic through school-based decision-making and community participation – or does devolution ensure the efficient and effective delivery of clearly defined educational services to school communities through administrative rather than political devolution?
- What is the role of equity and social justice in this approach to both policy-making and policy?
Policy historiography, archaeology, and genealogy
The final (meta-)model or classification of critical education policy analysis that we want to discuss here is the model of “policy historiography” elaborated by Gale (Gale, 2001, for further elaboration, see Gale, 2003; Olssen et al., 2004, pp. 53-58). In line with the what, why and how questions, it includes three “overlapping historical lenses with which to ‘read’ and ‘write’ policy research”: policy historiography (referring here to a particular lens), policy archaeology, and policy genealogy (Gale, 2001, p. 384). This model is based loosely on the Foucauldian approach of history, and on Scheurich’s post-structuralist methodology of policy archaeology developed in line with Foucault’s work (Scheurich, 1994). Each of these perspectives correlates with a specific set of research questions:

Policy historiography:
- What were the ‘public issues’ and ‘private troubles’ within a particular policy domain during previous periods and how were they addressed?
- What are they now?
- What is the nature of the change from the first to the second?
- What are the complexities in these coherent accounts of policy?
- What do these reveal about who is advantaged and who is disadvantaged by these arrangements? (Gale, 2001, p. 385)

Policy archaeology:
- Why are some items on the policy agenda (and not others)?
- Why are some policy actors involved in the production of policy (and not others)?
- What are the conditions that regulate the patterns of interaction of those involved? (ibid., pp. 387–388)

Policy genealogy:
- How [do] policies change over time?
- How [might] the rationalities and consensus of policy production be problematised?
- How [are] temporary alliances formed and reformed around conflicting interests in the policy production process? (ibid., pp. 389–390)

Each perspective tells a particular story about policy (and policy making): “Policy historiography [is coupled] with the substantive issues of policy at particular hegemonic moments, policy archaeology with conditions that regulate policy formations, and policy genealogy with social actors’ engagement with policy” (Gale, 2001, p. 385). Of central importance here is the focus on ‘temporary policy settlements’, that is, the discursive frame at a particular historical moment and the geographical location within which a specific policy is produced, their possible hegemonic character and their relation to other past and waiting settlements.” According to Gale, and drawing on Mill, part of such a settlement is
“how personal troubles are dealt with as public issues and how public issues are expressed in personal troubles” (ibid., p. 381). In view of this, policy historiography (in its specific meaning) studies the conditions of a policy settlement, while the archaeological perspective looks at the particular parameters of a settlement. Policy genealogy is focused on the particularities and realisations within a settlement and the role of actors. Focusing on the substance of hegemonic policy settlements, its conditions, the actors involved and strategies deployed, this (meta-)classification is concerned with critical advocacy. Advocacy can be situated at the level of a “radical democracy”, where all policy actors are acknowledged, and that aims at establishing conditions for new conversations, new collective commitments and creative possibilities (Gale, 2001; 2003).

CONCLUSION: CRITICAL STYLES AND PUBLIC CONCERNS

In the concluding section of the introduction, we want to return to the general scope of the handbook in order to explore different styles of critique, and the commitment to public concerns.

Styles of critique

The contributions collected in this book aim at the re-reading of challenges offered by the current policy agenda. Re-reading today’s policy agenda is regarded as a critical activity that involves a moment of de-familiarisation. The goal is a de-familiarization with the current way policies pose problems, offer and implement solutions and justify agendas, or with the way that power is exercised in society and how problems are framed. The previous sections clarified in detail that the critical potential of re-reading can be related to a variety of approaches: revealing an underlying rationality, identifying unspoken interests, focusing on unintended consequences, pointing at contradictions, mapping the field of contingencies. What motivates these approaches is a commitment to education and society. De-familiarization thus involves a concern with what can be captured in the general expression ‘the public, and its education’. In other words, the act of critical re-reading and the moment of de-familiarization opens up a new space for thought and action. This space should be regarded as a public space because the type of questions emerging here constitute ‘a public’, that is, these questions affect people and transform education into their concern – even if it is decided afterwards to reformulate what is at stake in terms of private interests. There are different ways, however, to open up this public space. We want to introduce the term ‘styles of critique’ to explore these differences.

Generally speaking, the term critical in relation to education policy research can be located at three levels. The term can be used to qualify the relation the scholar has towards her own or someone else’s research. Critical then refers to the use of research methods, the use of research data, or the approach of someone else’s research in reviews. At this level, every researcher is expected to be critical. The term critical can also be used at the level of the theoretical or analytical framework
that is used in research. Scholars relying on critical theory or other normative theories of society are called critical. There is, however, another level where the term critical is used: the relation of the scholar to her present. It is at this level that we want to locate the critical policy orientation that is explored throughout the book.

Critique here is first of all about an **attitude** or **ethos**, that is, a way of being involved with one’s present and with what is at stake in one’s society. Being involved with one’s present or being attentive to what is going on in one’s society actually disrupts what is going on or the course of history (of policy, of capital accumulation, of discourse…). The present is the moment where one finds oneself as a scholar confronted with the question whether this present should be the moment of inaugurating change. In sum, critique is the attitude that involves an act of re-reading resulting in a moment of de-familiarization, and opening up a space for new thought or action in between past and future. When situating critique at the level of the scholar’s ethos, perhaps different styles of being critical could be distinguished. The notion style then refers to the specific form of one’s attitude, that is, the form of one’s relation to one’s present.

The critical scholar can take an attitude of **unmasking**, that is, opening up a space for public concern by describing the effects of policy measures on existing power relations in society or the way policy discourses are linked up with power configurations. This is in line with what Fairclough labelled as ideological critique. The attitude of **revealing** (or rhetorical critique) is concerned with rhetoric in education policies, and thus with how language is used by actors to justify decisions or to persuade other actors. **Repositioning** could be regarded as a third style of critique, and aims at positioning oneself in a different way towards policy and the included discourses. Opening up a space for new ways of acting is the main concern here. Finally, **reformulation** is about regarding education policy as something that can and should be tactically re-written. Creating new ways of thinking and speaking is a major concern here.13

**Public concerns**

We discussed in the previous sections that critical thought assumes that policy facts and problems are socially constructed, and that awareness of this construction opens up a space for re-construction. Here, we want to explore in more detail this assumption and specifically the scope of critical studies in an age where policy makers became critical. Indeed, among policy makers there is an awareness that they ‘read’ the world in a particular way. Consequently, for policy makers re-reading their own reading or one’s opponents’ reading becomes in itself a political strategy. Some examples can illustrate this.

The use of spin in policy making and the strategic adoption of impression management indicates that in the field of policy the construction and re-construction of facts/images is a deliberate strategy (Gewirtz et al., 2004). There is thus a general awareness of the politics of policy problem definition, and it is actually used deliberately as a policy strategy. Another example is Foucault’s
analysis of neoliberal governmentality. He stresses that the ‘constructivist perspective’ is a core component of neoliberal ways of reasoning. Part of neoliberalism is to approach the market for instance not as a natural domain (as in classic liberal rationalities), but as a construction (cf. Foucault, 2004a/b). It is precisely this constructivist rationality which opens up spaces to justify the role of state regulation in creating the market, and which actually support marketisation and the constructing and reconstruction of problems as deliberate technologies to govern the public sector.

Still another example is mentioned by Lyotard. He notices that critique has become part of the liberal-capitalist system (1992, p. 28; 1996, p. 6ff). Critique and emancipation are no longer referring to something outside the system (it is hard to imagine an alternative for the current system, according to Lyotard) but is a strategy within the system leading to further differentiation and hence the system’s survival. In a similar line, Dale (2006, p. 180) stresses in reference to Santos that in today’s context where social regulation is mainly ceded to the market, social emancipation is about market freedom. A final example is the shift from public policy and the social reform agenda towards new public management and the innovation or restructuring agenda. In new public management, restructuring or change is the rule so to speak. There is a shift from structural change in view of social reform towards permanent change in view of efficiency, effectiveness or increased performance. The latter involves a ‘critical’ awareness about permanent construction and reconstruction in a way similar to the critical scholar’s awareness. One could even go a step further by stating that in times of restructuring, being for example ‘an old style teacher’ is progressive (Lindblad & Popkewitz, 2004, p. xxix).

In sum, problem solving, and the attitude to accept the problems as they are formulated, no longer seem adequate to describe what happens in the context of policy and politics. Hence, critical theory no longer seems adequate to describe the assumptions of policy makers and policies. Confronted with this state of affairs – that is, with policy makers ‘behaving critically’ – Latour offers us a way out that is worth exploring. According to Latour, critical theory has focused too much on matters of fact and on questioning what is behind what people take for granted. What is falling out of sight, according to Latour, are matters of concern and the gathering and assembling involved in matters of concern. He argues for a new kind of realism:

My argument is that a certain form of critical spirit has sent us down the wrong path, encouraging us to fight the wrong enemies and, worst of all, to be considered as friends by the wrong sort of allies because of a little mistake in the definition of its main target. The question was never to get away from facts but closer to them, not fighting empiricism but, on the contrary, renewing empiricism. What I am going to argue is that the critical mind, if it is to renew itself and be relevant again, is to be found in the cultivation of a stubbornly realist attitude – to speak like William James – but a realism dealing with what I will call matters of concern, not matters of fact (Latour, 2004, p. 231).
Oriented towards matters of concern the critic is not in the first place revealing what is behind the taken for granted policy problems, but contributing to the transformation of current policy problems in matters that affect people:

The critic is not the one who lifts the rugs from under the feet of the naïve believers, but the one who offers the participants arenas in which to gather (Latour, 2004, p. 246).

Precisely in being orientated to and helping to develop matters of concern the critical scholar is playing his/her political role, because something that is of concern unerringly brings people together; not only because they necessarily share opinions about what is important, but also, and often primarily, because the matter of concern divides them:

(…) We don’t assemble because we agree, look alike, feel good, are socially compatible or wish to fuse together but because we are brought by divisive matters of concern into some neutral, isolated place in order to come to some sort of provisional makeshift (dis)agreement (Latour, 2005).

In line with this, one could think of the critical policy studies as interested in making things public through helping to create and support matters of concern. Hence, the specificity of Latour’s proposal seems to reside in his idea that research should be linked up with matters of concern, and not in the first place with matters of fact. In other words, for the critical policy scholar the thing she investigates is from the very start a matter of concern. Although research with a critical policy orientation undoubtedly always has been familiar with this idea, a reminder does no harm – especially because there seems to be an ever present tendency or ‘academic reflex’ to look at this critical commitment as a matter of fact in need of rational justification.

NOTES

1 Raab nuances this statement with regard to the 1970s and 1980s and the influence of critical sociology and sociology of knowledge in educational studies (Raab, 1994b, p. 21).
2 Although, as mentioned earlier, some scholars question the role of the state apparatus in change processes, and regard education in its form as radical pedagogy to be the site for inaugurating social and political change.
3 This discussion is related to discussions between approaches that focus on the macro-level or micro-level, bottom-up and top-down approaches, and approaches of policy formation or approaches of policy effects and outcomes (Raab, 1994a/b).
4 In contrast to Dale, Apple shares with Ball the interest in a (Marxist) ethnography and in understanding cultural struggles. Nevertheless, Apple’s interest is not in the first place the politics and conflicts in policy trajectories and processes (as is Ball’s), but the power and conflict in and around the school and curriculum.
5 Similar to Ball, Popkewitz has an interest in the productive forces of knowledge and discourses and the relational view on power, however he takes it further in bracketing (at the theoretical/analytical level) the role of actors, agencies or structures in explaining a particular assemblage. At the level of the descriptions of surface mechanisms and divisions, he is closer to Dale, however, without holding to the latter’s neo-Marxist assumptions.
For instance, with regard to policy research in the UK, three (qualitative) orientations are distinguished (Maguire & Ball, 1994, pp. 278–281). First, elite studies based on life history methods in order to grasp longer policy trends (e.g. Gewirtz & Ozga, 1990) or based on interviews with key-informants in view of current developments in education policy (e.g. Ball, 1990). Second, trajectory studies that follow a specific policy cycle including the context of influence (based on interviews for instance), the micropolitics within the state and as part of the production of policy text, and finally the context of practice, that is the phase of implementation (based on case studies) (e.g. Edwards et al., 1989; Henry & Taylor, 1995). The third orientation is implementation research focusing on the interpretation of policy texts and their translation into practices, based on participant observation methods and interviews as part of critical ethnography.

Fairclough uses the concept discourse in two ways (Fairclough, 2005). Firstly, discourse refers to semiotic elements (next to non-discursive elements), while secondly, discourse is used to indicate a way of representing, next to a style and genre. Hence, an ‘order of discourse’ (first meaning) combines specific styles, genres and discourses (second meaning).

Lingard & Rawolle (2004, pp. 368–369) make a distinction between five cross-field effects: effects at the level of structures of the field, effects related to the impact of an event, systematic effect in underlying values, temporal effect or effects limited in duration and hierarchical and vertical effects occurring in fields that are asymmetrically related.


Except for interviews, course summaries and transcripts of a few of Foucault’s courses, the sociologically oriented work of Burchell et al. (1991), Barry et al. (1996), Lemke (1997), Rose (1999), Dean (1999) and Bröckling et al. (2004) have been particularly important as resources for the field of study related to governmentality. It could be expected that the recent publications of Foucault’s courses and the English translations will increase this interest (Foucault, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2004a/b, 2008), as will any future publication of the courses.

One can rightly refer to these studies as a kind of new subdiscipline within the humanities (Dean, 1999, p. 2). However, the term discipline may not be fully appropriate since it might mask the huge diversity of these studies, both in terms of research domain and in terms of method (Rose, 1999, p. 9). What they share, however, is an interest in actual forms of governmentality, minimally conceived of as the strategies of governing people and governing ourselves.

The term settlement is widely used, however, often in slightly different ways: Seddon, 1989; Kenway, 1990.

It could be interesting to elaborate these styles with Hacking’s distinction between six grades of commitment (Hacking, 1999, p. 19).

REFERENCES


GLOBALISATION

XAVIER BONAL & AINA TARABINI

GLOBAL SOLUTIONS FOR GLOBAL POVERTY?

*The World Bank Education Policy and the Anti-Poverty Agenda*

**INTRODUCTION**

During the last decades the World Bank (WB) has been without any doubt the most significant subject of globalisation processes in education and development. Political and economic transformations have transformed the Breton Woods institutions as actors with the ability to shape and even impose agendas to less developed countries. Since the beginning of the eighties the World Bank influence on education has expanded enormously, both quantitatively and qualitatively. This expansion has afforded it a quasi-monopoly in the area of international aid for educational development. Changes in the economic world order, shifts in educational multilateralism and internal crises in institutions such as UNESCO resulted in the dominance of institutions such as the IMF or the World Bank in shaping the international agenda for development (Mundy, 1999, p. 40).

Curiously, the World Bank’s prominence in education over the last two decades has coincided with the application of structural adjustment policies in both Latin America and Africa. Against a background of prescribing policies of extreme austerity, lending in the educational sector and other social policy areas has increased. This change can be explained by the priority that the World Bank has given to institutional reform, an essential aspect of these adjustment programmes and a fundamental condition for granting loans (Mundy, 2002, p. 488). As a result, although the adjustment programmes have led to drastic reductions in basic subsidies, the financing allocated for sectorial reform has increased. This is a key point in understanding the World Bank’s capacity to influence the direction of education policy in developing countries. Although, in quantitative terms, educational financing channelled through the Bank may represent a relatively small percentage of a country’s domestic educational budget, the conditional nature of these credits increases their influence on the administration and management of educational systems. The ideological capacity of the WB in shaping national policies has located education as one of the clearest examples of the supranational leverage in domestic policies.

The pressures, criticisms and evident failure of the adjustment programmes have, however, caused modifications to certain important aspects of the World Bank’s agenda. Substantial changes in the Bank’s rhetoric have been observed since the beginning of the decade, even as regards its strategy for programme design and evaluation. The incorporation in 1990 of the “Education for All”

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programme, the creation of a Social Adjustment Unit charged with assessing the social impact of stabilisation policies (Samoff, 1994), the influence of the work of Amartya Sen on human development, the engagement of Joseph Stiglitz in 1997 as chief economist at the World Bank (and the development of the so-called Post-Washington Consensus), and, above all, the priority of the fight against poverty are all factors that explain the reorientation of some of the Bank’s strategies and priorities. Clearly, the new order of priorities demonstrates that education has remained one of the “strong” areas of World Bank policy, as shown by some of its strategic documents (World Bank, 1995, 1999a, 1999b, 2001a). In the struggle against poverty, education appears as one of the key mechanisms for facilitating the social insertion and employment of excluded communities, providing them with the abilities that they require to be individually independent.

The aim of this chapter is to make a critical assessment of the explicit strategies of the World Bank’s education policies aimed at fighting poverty since the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). The introduction of SAP locates the World Bank as a subject of globalisation of education. Within the ambiguous terrain of assessing what globalisation is and what type of effects it generates on economic, social and political relations (Hay, 1999), the WB appears to be a real subject embedded of political and economic capacity to generate global changes in educational discourses and practices. Actually, the WB procedures and objectives can be considered an extreme case of globalisation of education: as an international organisation, the WB has shown an enormous capacity to generate convergence in policy processes and “desirable” policy goals (though effects may differ depending on national conditions). Although the aim of the objective is ambitious, we will present two main phases of the World Bank rhetoric on education and poverty: the one embedded in structural adjustment programmes and the post-Washington Consensus of the nineties with a special reference on the most recent strategies that have put the struggle against poverty at the forefront of the Bank’s policies and loans; that is, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). The chapter not only pretends to introduce a critical perspective in order to analyse the WB’s discourses and proposals in the fight against poverty but also to identify the main failings that underline the positive and hoped-for relationship between investment in education and the reduction of poverty. A re-reading of the WB’s proposals therefore will be addressed, exploring its main limitations and omissions.

EDUCATION AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION UNDER THE WASHINGTON CONSENSUS

The “Washington Consensus” term was coined by Williamson (1993) in the early nineties to refer to the economic policy agenda that the IMF, the WB and the US Executive Board were undertaking in Latin America during the eighties. That agenda included a number of policy ‘recommendations’ to be followed by developing countries in order to achieve the necessary stabilisation of their economies and institutional reforms that would facilitate the insertion of those countries into the competitive global economy. In broad terms, the Washington Consensus approach recommends that governments should reform their policies by
following a number of measures. As Gore (2000) argues, these measures should: (a) pursue macroeconomic stability by controlling inflation and reducing fiscal deficits; (b) open their economies to the rest of the world through trade and capital account liberalisation, and (c) liberalise domestic product and factor markets through privatisation and deregulation (Gore, 2000, pp. 789–790).

During the eighties, the Washington Consensus appeared as the paradigm for economic development. It substituted former approaches, especially those based on Keynesian economics and modernisation, in which the state intervention was crucial to stimulate economic demand through direct investment. Clearly shaped by neo-classical economics, the Washington Consensus pursued economic stabilisation (control of inflation rates, control of balance of payments deficit, public expenditure reduction and so on) through strong adjusting measures, and claimed the retreat of the state as an economic actor that disturbed the efficient allocative role of market forces. This paradigm made the state almost disappear from the scene of structural change for development. The role of the state was reduced to generate the necessary conditions for a market-led economy (mainly through privatisation and deregulation of markets). Market economics were supposed to make the economy competitive enough to overcome the initial difficulties brought about by adjustment policies and to generate the necessary growth rate to insert developing countries into the new economic order.

Multilateral organisations like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank became global agents for spreading the neo-liberal paradigm of development. During the eighties, both institutions were able to impose the Washington Consensus agenda to many developing countries through loan conditionality. Their hegemonic position within the international market of financial assistance for development and the extreme dependency of highly indebted countries on international loans, mostly to refund external debt interests, shifted completely the relationship between the Bretton Woods institutions and borrowing countries. Through programs like Structural Adjustment Facilities, Extended Fund Facilities or Structural Adjustment Loans, both the IMF and the WB were able to impose the neo-liberal paradigm of development to borrowing countries, whatever the previous social and economic conditions were. In Latin America, for instance, the imposition of loan conditionality entailed a dramatic structural policy change, from Import Substitution Industrialisation (ISI) to export-oriented models of development (Gwynne & Kay, 2000). That is, a development model based on state protectionism of strategic industries was forced to disappear and be substituted by a free market model in which non-subsidised industries should openly compete in the global market of free trade.

A number of empirical studies have shown that the programs extended by the WB and the IMF were associated with increased poverty, increased inequality of income and slow economic growth (Stewart, 1995; Cornia et al. 1997; Chossudovsky, 1998). The failure of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) as appropriate recipes for development is illustrated by a simple fact: since the mid eighties, third world countries have become net capital exporters to northern countries (Chossudovsky, 1998, p. 51), that is, they have paid more than they have received. Debt repayments account for more than capital transfers to the third world (counted
as loans, direct foreign investment and development assistance). Of course, not only International Financial Institutions (IFIs) are responsible for this failure. Actually, it is always difficult to provide an accurate evaluation of the reasons why certain programs were wrongly designed or implemented. National problems (governmental corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and so on) might added difficulties to the implementation of IFI’s agenda. Whatever the concrete causes, the global result was the economic and social devastation of third world countries during the eighties (the “lost decade”, in Latin America).

Under the hegemony of the Washington Consensus, the priority of macro-economic stabilisation, pro-export policies and commercial and economic liberalisation are considered to be factors that are fundamental to economic growth. From the earliest signs of growth, once a preliminary adjustment period has passed, the effects of growth on the reduction of poverty are considered to be “automatic.” Indeed, throughout the 1980s it is unusual to find any analysis or discussion in the World Bank’s documentation regarding the greater or lesser redistributive impact of its Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). As Mundy (2002) pointed out, “it is widely assumed that market-led growth resumed and government distortions were eliminated, the demand for the labour of the poor would increase, ensuring their enhanced buying power and economic betterment” (Mundy, 2002, p. 488).

This “trickle-down” effect is even sufficiently powerful to alleviate the effects of a reduction in public expenditure in education or other social policy areas. It is assumed that the improvements in efficiency resulting from a reduction in the public sector and an increase in private provision will in themselves generate employment and, as a consequence, facilitate social integration in the most disadvantaged social sectors. As a result, the World Bank’s main prescriptions are aimed at drastically reducing the public sector, at deregulation and at privatisation. This model for the automatic reduction of poverty ignores the relationship between inequality and economic growth. If, under the chairmanship of Robert McNamara (1968-81), this was based on a contradictory relationship between both factors (and therefore the need to establish priorities for intervention, accompanying them with compensation policies), the dominant neo-liberal orthodoxy of the World Bank’s policy during the 1980s meant that no specific agenda was developed in relation to policies for redistribution or the struggle against poverty.

The reverse effects that SAPs had both on education and especially on poverty, goes a long way towards explaining the progressive abandonment of a stricter neo-liberal orthodoxy and the adoption of a development agenda that includes strategies which are complementary to a market-led model of economic growth. It is in the context of adjustment crisis and the emergence of strong critiques to the Bank’s policies that a new discourse on education and poverty must be interpreted.

THE POST-WASHINGTON CONSENSUS: A NEW AGENDA FOR FIGHTING AGAINST POVERTY?

In the late eighties the Washington Consensus was experiencing difficulties in face of a number of criticisms. The rise of poverty and subsequent complaints about
structural adjustment effects led to demands of adjustment with a human face (Ilon, 1996). Simultaneously, the success of East Asian economies opened claims for a different role of the state in development (Fine, 2001, p. 139). In Latin America, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)’s neostructuralism tried to establish a “Southern Consensus” to challenge the neoliberal assumptions of the Washington Consensus and claimed for a context-based strategy of industrialisation to ensure the integration of national economies into the global economy (Gore, 2000, p. 796). The work of Joseph Stiglitz as Chief Economist to the WB in the late nineties, and a number of lectures of Amartya Sen at the WB, opened a new debate about development and generated conditions for a Post-Washington Consensus. Fine (2001) describes the features of the Post-Washington Consensus as follows:

First, it is sharply critical of the Washington Consensus and seeks an alternative in which state intervention is greater in depth and breadth. Second, it rejects the analytical agenda of state versus market, arguing that the two are complements and can work together and not against one another. Third, if less explicit, it poses an alternative agenda for development economics and policy debate, seeking to establish the appropriate role of the state in view of market imperfections. Fourth, it also brings the social back into the analysis as the means of addressing, and potentially correcting, market imperfections – rather than simply creating them as for the Washington Consensus for which the world would be a better place if it were made more and more, if not completely, like the market (Fine, 2001, p. 139).

Interestingly enough, and as Fine argues, in policy terms the Post-Washington Consensus does not differ radically from the Washington Consensus. State interventionism is still restricted to market imperfections, which are now recognised, but this is different from the Keynesian state model of development, in which the state plays a more active role in tax policy and resource allocation. The state is still seen as captured by rent-seeking agents, that is, as a space inducing clientelism, a major obstacle for bringing structural change. Thus, it is questionable that the Post-Washington Consensus brings a new agenda for policy development and educational development. A review of some education policy papers published in the late nineties (World Bank, 1999a & 1999b) shows new objectives and commitments for education; social aspects have clearly more relevance than it had in previous statements. However, it is questionable the extent to which new objectives and commitments for education challenge the basic principles of economics of education that sustain the rationale of WB education policy. Basic features of WB education policy, like the rates of return rationale for educational investments, the importance of private education, or the marginalisation of vocational education and training, remain unaltered.

In fact, since the 1980s, the WB relies heavily on rates of return to education as the only rationale for educational investment (World Bank, 1995; Bennell, 1996). Since then, financing basic education has become the first priority of the WB’s intervention, at the cost of technical and even secondary and higher education. This
political priority has given credibility to the Bank in two aspects: first, it relies on apparently irrefutable arguments legitimated by the dominant paradigm of economics of education; secondly, it makes the Bank appear as an institution concerned with the struggle against poverty and educational opportunities (Bonal, 2002). However, the rates-of-return rationale has also legitimated other priorities in policy making. It has justified arguments in favour of more user participation in the financing of post-basic education and has opened the door for an increase of the private sector in educational supply. The current WB’s objectives and commitments for education not only maintain the top priority on primary education but also the recommendations for increasing the role of the private sector in secondary and tertiary education. As the World Bank (2006) points out:

Greater attention must also be given to the role of the private sector in education provision, given the large numbers of children in low-income countries without access to primary education and the significant unmet demand for higher education in many countries (...) Public provision of good-quality primary education at no cost to parents or children is the cornerstone for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, but there is room and need—in low- and middle-income countries alike—to promote increased private participation in education. The aim is to help meet demand; improve education quality (international assessments show that some private school students consistently outperform public school students); increase private sector access to public funding; promote teacher training for primary and secondary education; and support system wide capacity building at tertiary and vocational levels (World Bank, 2006, pp. 33–34).

However, the post-Washington Consensus does frame a new rhetoric on education and poverty reduction. The *World Development Report 2000/2001, Attacking Poverty* sets out the World Bank’s desire to set itself up as an institution charged with overseeing “global welfare”, along with the strategies and priorities that should support this objective. The World Bank’s greater receptiveness to the social implications of economic growth in its analysis of development is especially clear in chapter 3 of the report: “Growth, inequality and poverty.” This is an extensively documented chapter, which assesses the relationship between these three variables on the basis of questions such as “Why are similar rates of growth associated with different rates of poverty reduction?” (World Bank, 2001a, p. 51). Far from offering an unequivocal reply to this question, the World Bank’s discourse abandons the classic incompatibility between growth and equality, acknowledging that:

Recent thinking – and empirical evidence – weaken the case for such a trade-off: lower inequality can increase efficiency and economic growth through a variety of channels. Unequal societies are more prone to difficulties in collective action, possibly reflected in dysfunctional institutions, political instability, a propensity for populist redistributive policies, or greater volatility in policies – all of which can lower growth. And to the extent that inequality in income or assets coexists with imperfect credit markets, poor
people may be unable to invest in their human and physical capital, with adverse consequences for long-run growth (World Bank, 2001a, p. 56).

Even so, in the same chapter, the World Bank hastens to assure us that:

This is not to say that every pro-equity policy will have such desired effects. If the reduction in inequality comes at the expense of the other factors conducive to growth, the gains from redistribution can vanish. Expropriation of assets on a grand scale can lead to political upheaval and violent conflict, undermining growth. And sometimes attempts to redistribute income can reduce incentives to save, invest, and work (World Bank, 2001a, pp. 56–57).

Certain important points can be derived from this chapter when interpreting the model used by the World Bank to attack poverty: a certain resistance to accepting the majority of analyses that underline the positive relationship between growth, equality and the reduction of poverty, the tendency to attribute the fact that growth benefits the entire population and effectively reduces poverty to internal (domestic) factors rather than to the design of its own policies or recommendations, and the importance given to education as a key strategy for permitting social inclusion. The other chapters in the report confirm the tendency towards a less orthodox approach by the World Bank. They offer recommendations for the reorientation of public spending (with allocations that offer more benefit to the poorer sectors), mechanisms aimed at making the markets function more favourably for the poor, proposals for target interventions in social programmes, improvements in administrative efficiency, stimuli for direct participation in the decision-making process by the most disadvantaged sectors, initiatives for involving all types of organisations in a coalition against poverty, strategies for generating and mobilising social capital in development projects and strategies for reducing the vulnerability of the poor. The range of strategies and priorities is broad.

In this context, certain changes could be seen in the direction of the World Bank’s education policies. The most significant change was undoubtedly in the Bank’s desire to establish new mechanisms for determining the credits to be borne in mind in a regional or local context. New terminology, which included expressions such as “Comprehensive Development Framework” (World Bank, 1999a), reflected the integral nature that the World Bank’s interventions attempted to acquire under the management of James Wolfensohn. This was an attempt to integrate sector-based strategies (in education, health and infrastructure) with broader programmes whose design was always preceded by evaluations of the context in which they were to be applied. This new approach also required changes to be made to the World Bank’s intervention methodology. Over recent years, the World Bank has sought the assistance of NGOs and other international bodies when designing, planning and implementing its projects. It has also resorted to a system of dialogue, holding direct consultations with the potential beneficiaries of its projects and members of civil society in its borrower countries and regions. This is intended to establish more participatory planning systems that are better adapted to real local circumstances.
These new trends mean that education policy has been completely adapted to a development agenda which is more flexible and which, above all, adopts selective actions in respect of target groups as a new strategy for intervention. Within the educational sphere, the global priorities established by the World Bank centre around four areas: basic education for the poorest sectors and for girls; intervention programmes for early child development and health in education; the use of innovative methods in education (distance education, use of new technologies) and the so-called “systemic reform” (in curricula and assessment, management and the financing of education). Each of these strategies is applied selectively in different countries (particularly in Africa) and enjoys the collaboration of NGOs and other bodies (World Bank, 1999a, p. 30).

Thus, WB policy documents during the nineties showed that the Bank’s conception of poverty changed. The incorporation of the Human Development Index, which measures nutritional status, educational attainment and health status, shows a difference with the conventional understanding of poverty as per capita income (Pender, 2001, p. 406). However, it is less clear that these changes altered loan conditionality based on the priority of fighting poverty. Actually, strategies against poverty do not necessarily entail a paradigmatic change in WB education policy. On the one hand, attacking poverty can be understood as a state strategy to account for a market imperfection: to compensate for the failure of the trickle down effect of the market, the state uses emergency services to attend the most damaged sectors of society – see Robertson and Dale (2002) on the use of local states of emergency by the neo-liberal state. Poor sectors of society become target groups in a state logic of intervention that manages risk and uncertainty. Moreover, according to Ilon (2002) the WB’s concern on poverty is based exclusively in an economic logic, which means, to avoid the risks that poverty generates for markets’ stability and growth.

On the other hand, strategies against poverty do not necessarily entail a redistributive economic and social policy. A policy to ensure basic needs for the poorest can be addressed without locating redistribution as the main priority for education policy, neither changing the trickle down logic of the market as the means to ensure redistribution. Actually, in the WB education policy discourses redistribution as a prior objective only appears when dealing with the finance of post-compulsory education, a discourse that provides the rationale to legitimate more user-pay share and the concentration of public spending in basic education. Progressive or regressive redistributive effects of expanding the private sector of education are never considered by the WB policy papers.

In policy terms, what the new strategies meant for an education policy against poverty was the “targeting the poor” approach. Identifying the poor and concentrating resources and efforts on providing them with the opportunity to gain access to different markets became the predominant political strategy. This new approach had a rapid effect on the loan portfolios of the World Bank and the IMF, to the extent that, by the end of the 1990s, so-called “emergency social funds” formed 50% of all structural adjustment credits (Mundy, 2002, p. 492).
The rapid expansion of targeting programmes has led to a number of debates regarding the advantages and disadvantages of selective action as compared with more universalist policies. Discussions centre around the underlying philosophies of the various policy options (what type of action is socially more just), the value of one type of action over another in specific political contexts and problems relating to the coverage, selection and implementation costs of each type of policy. Moreover, according to Mkandawire (2005) the current debate on the choice between targeting and universalism is couched in the language of “efficiency.” That is, targeting is presented as the best strategy in order to maximise the benefits of resource allocation in a context of budget constraints; as the most efficient strategy to guarantee simultaneously poverty reduction and economic growth.

Educational targeting in fact is presented as more efficient than any other strategy in order to guarantee the access of poor people into the school and, consequently, to increase their human capital and their chances of breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty. It is justified on the bases of the need to compensate the social sectors that have not been able to take advantage of the opportunities provided by economic growth and educational expansion by helping in their empowerment and activation. It is presented, in short, as the key mechanism for guaranteeing the “activation” of poor people, thus contributing to the increase of labour productivity, economic growth and social development (Tarabini, 2007).

THE POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY PAPERS

The consolidation of the anti-poverty strategy of the World Bank and its aim to locate the struggle against poverty as the main mission of the Bank took the form of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP). PRSP were introduced in 1999 by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and, as Ruckert (2006) points out, are one of the main new policy tools for the Post Washington Consensus be articulated.

The PRSPs are instruments which aim is to describe a country ‘macroeconomic, structural and social policies and programs over a three year or longer horizon, to promote broad based growth and reduce poverty, as well as associated external financing needs and major sources of financing’’ (World Bank, 2001b). Formally speaking, the content of each document is elaborated by the developing countries themselves, trying to reflect their specific needs and features. Principles that underline the PRSP must include a result-oriented strategy (with targets that can be monitored); a comprehensive strategy (incorporating macroeconomic, structural and social policy aspects); a country driven strategy (that is, it should be oriented differently according to the special features of the country) and a participatory strategy (based on partnership between IFIs, governments, and other actors, like NGOs). Education is one of the major elements of the PRSP (Caillods and Hallak, 2004). PRSP include “good practices” for the sector and recommendations for investment in education that focus on the most vulnerable groups.
However, the World Bank itself provides the guidelines for developing countries to prepare their PRSP. The World Bank published *Sourcebook for Poverty Reduction Strategies* that is intended to be “a guide to assist countries in the development and strengthening of poverty reduction strategies.” The sourcebook contains a very detailed chapter on education policy to draw the best educational practices for poverty reduction. As it is stated in the document: “[the education chapter] provides diagnostic tools and research findings that can help countries identify the policies and programs likely to have the most powerful impact on education opportunities and outcomes for poor children and illiterate adults within their country context” (Aoki, Bruns et al., 2002, p. 233). The chapter is organised in four main parts. The first one presents a rationale for investing in education as part of a general strategy for poverty reduction. The second one focuses on how to elaborate a diagnosis of the education system performance. The third part is related to policies and defines a number of “best practices” and “benchmarks” for fighting against poverty. The last one focuses on implementation, financing and evaluation.

Without any doubt, the educational chapter is clearly guided by human capital theory. The main thesis stands that in order to empower the poor and increase their capacity to create income, the strategy should remove obstacles and facilitate access to education and training for the poor. According to this view, primary education continues to have a central role. It remains understood as the area with the highest rate of return and therefore, the educational level to be prioritised. Moreover, the strategy puts an important emphasis on targeting the poor, and recommends educational policies to be directly addressed to poor students and families. The strategy makes a special reference to conditioned cash transfer programmes as one of the good educational policies to follow in the struggle against poverty. According to Caillods and Hallak (2004), what seems to be missing in PRSP is a theory concerning teaching and learning: “the PRSPs do not discuss the teaching and learning strategies most likely to facilitate participation of the poor and ensure real learning” (Caillods & Hallak, 2004, p. 18). Reducing poverty requires that the poor do not only attend school, but that they do really learn and acquire relevant skills to overcome their poverty condition.

PRSPs are supposed to be nor compulsory and neither conditional. However, several elements cast doubt about this theoretical premise:

First of all, all PRSP have to carry out the same general principles, following the *Sourcebooks for Poverty Reduction Strategies* instructions and recommendations. The *Sourcebooks* (Klugman 2002a, 2002b) are professedly to reflect the thinking and practices associated with the Comprehensive Development Framework, the World Development Report 2000/2001 and the good international practices related to poverty reduction. As a result, four priority areas are identified as imperatively necessary for bringing both economic growth and poverty alleviation to developing countries. These areas have turned into conditions that have to be met before concessional lending for a PRSP can be approved (Ruckert, 2006). The four areas are the following ones, p. 1) Macroeconomic and structural policies to support sustainable growth in which the poor participate, 2) Improved governance, including public sector financial management, 3) Appropriate sectoral policies and programs...
and 4) Realistic costing and appropriate levels of funding for the major programs (Klugman, 2002a, p. 16). The Sourcebook specifies that the particular content of each area will differ across countries. However, the areas themselves are expected to appear in any PRSP, being the framework for all discussions about it.

Secondly, the content of a country’s PRSP have to be compatible with the framing prescriptions of the respective Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) of the World Bank and Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) of the International Monetary Fund (Weber, 2004). Both the CAS and the PRGF are supposed to reflect the country’s priorities and specific circumstances. PRSP priorities, therefore, are not able to contradict the general framework and the specific targets and indicators that the CAS and the PRGF identify as central in achieving the stated outcomes.

Thirdly, the European Union (EU) decided to base its five year assistance programmes in African, Caribbean and Asian Pacific countries on PRSPs, declaring that: “The framework and basic tool for European development cooperation is the poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP), which aims to promote country-driven policies with local ownership and partnership. All countries wishing to receive EU aid are required to develop a PRSP, and EC policy is to fund only activities covered within a country’s PRSP” (European Commission, 2003, p. 5). At the same time, key bilateral donors like the Netherlands and the United Kingdom orientate their assistance strategies on the basis of the PRSPs.

Finally, the PRSPs are considered by the Executive Boards of the IMF and World Bank as the basis for concessional lending from each institution and debt relief under the joint Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Financial flows of aid, whether linked to the reduction of debts, grants or concessional loans have been linked to the adoption by recipient countries of a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy (Cailléds & Hallak, 2004, p. 6). Moreover, having an approved PRSP is a condition for being considered in the Education for All (EFA) Fast Track Initiative (FTI). PRSP becomes the framework for the IFIs development assistance to lending countries. These circumstances put clear the PRSPs do not only recommend but also prescribe and shape policies to be implemented by developing countries. In fact, the IFI’s final decisions in supporting or disapproving national PRSPs remains quite ambiguous (Ruckert, 2006): “While the shift to country ownership will allow substantially more leeway in terms of policy design and choices, acceptance by the Bank and the IMF boards will depend on the current international understanding of what is effective in lowering poverty” (Klugman, 2002a, p. 4). Moreover, all the PRSPs documents and guidelines written by the World Bank or the IMF Staff highlight the need of setting an ‘enabling environment’ for the implementation of the full PRSP process. Far from being neutral this “environment” is based on the same criteria underlining the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Plans.

Craig and Porter (2003) argue that PRSPs sort the action priorities in the following way: “global economic integration first, good governance second, poverty reduction following as a result, underpinned by limited safety nets and human capital development” (Craig and Porter, 2003, p. 53). The main thesis of the
authors is that this prioritisation represents a refinement of the liberal political project and specifically a mode of “inclusive liberalism.” With the idea of “inclusive liberalism” the authors aim to identify a more eclectic strategy that introduces the importance of poverty reduction along with classical neo-liberal principles and policies. The main criticism of Craig and Porter to this new strategy is its silence with regard to power structures and inequalities. The PRSP consolidate a technical and apolitical approach to poverty that more than changing policy contents, it changes the labels. This idea fits with what some authors understand as the logic of Post-Washington Consensus: to complete, correct and complement the reforms of a decade ago but not to reverse them (Gwynne, 2004).

In fact several authors argue that anti-poverty policies applied within the “second generation reforms” do not represent, at all, the end of neo-liberalism. Some authors (Booth, 2003; Driscoll & Evans 2005; Stiglitz, 1998) that argue that Post Washington Consensus represents a fundamental rupture in development thinking and a progressive move away from neo-liberalism. On the contrary, according to authors like Cammack (2004), Soederberg (2005) or Robertson et al. (2007), anti-poverty policies are the best strategy of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund to maintain the neo-liberal model. As Soederberg pointed out: “(...) the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are not about doing away with conditionality, but should be seen instead as direct responses to the above mentioned threats to neo-liberalism, which are, in turn, targeting at reconfiguring and deepening neo-liberal domination over the growing number of the poor in the South” (Soedeberg, 2005, p. 339).

CONCLUSIONS: THE MISSING ASPECTS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND POVERTY

This paper has focused on the main principles that have underlined the World Bank education policy since the 1980s with regard to its effects for fighting poverty. A review of some of the key WB policy papers has shown the evolution of both discursive rhetoric and specific strategies for fighting poverty. Interestingly enough, the anti-poverty agenda has gain more and more space in the World Bank discourse for development and has become recently as the main mission of the Bank. However, as some authors have pointed out, even under the post-Washington consensus policies, the poverty alleviation approach remains framed by a political economy that always locates the objective of poverty reduction as a consequence of economic growth. Although there are extensive and important debates around the role that social inequalities can play to help poverty reduction strategies, that is, if reducing inequalities makes easier also to reduce poverty, the WB usually undervalues its role compared to the importance given to growth-led policies. The balance allows us to detect serious limitations in the role that the World Bank has assigned to educational development in order to achieve the poverty reduction target (one of the central goals of the Millennium Summit).

Nevertheless, it is also interesting to turn our view to the taken for granted understanding of the education and poverty relationship that is embedded in all
different poverty reduction strategies developed by the World Bank. And it is clear that the WB strategies stress the positive effect of education to combat poverty but fail to take into account the effects of poverty on education. This omission, which persists throughout the various approaches to education policy, not only conditions the central importance of education as a mechanism for breaking the intergenerational poverty cycle, it also explains why, on so many occasions, the policies designed for the most disadvantaged groups give such poor results. Social policies designed to “activate” the poor often place the need for intervention in the category of “cultural deprivation” while at the same time ignoring a set of objective obstacles that restrict any real possibility of the poor developing sustainable forms of investment, such as investment in human capital itself. When these obstacles are recognised, however, the strategy consists of facilitating access to markets that must adapt to the social and economic conditions of the excluded groups (World Bank, 2001b), which completely disregards the limitations that any market has in adapting to the needs of the poor, as well as the limitations of the poor themselves as regards subsistence via access to the formal markets.

But the exclusion processes associated with globalisation1 have a particular impact on the most vulnerable sectors, which are increasingly concerned with day-to-day survival and find themselves less able to benefit from policies that are designed to “activate” them and provide them with the means necessary for their social inclusion. If escaping from poverty requires more than 10 years’ schooling, who is in a position to visualise this objective? If the benefits of additional years in primary schooling are reduced, what use is it to remain at school when the cost of schooling is rising and at the same time people are getting poorer? If the school systems are becoming increasingly socially polarised, what use is the ability to gain access to the system with the least social value? If the working conditions of the teaching staff deteriorate, and with them educational standards, what quality of education is reserved for the poorest sectors?

There are, therefore, grounds for reviewing the minimum material conditions in which poor families can effectively invest in human capital over the long term and that will provide us with systems that enable us to determine when education policy can actually be effective as a strategy for combating poverty.

NOTES


2 The transfer from Third World to First World countries is four times superior to the Marshall Plan to reconstruct Europe after World War II. In the mid eighties total net transfer to the First World accounted for 250 billion dollars (Hoogvelt, 2001, p. 180).

3 Neostructuralism defines development as an integral process and takes into consideration not only economic elements but also social and political structures as well as institutional, cultural and psychological factors.

4 In any case the consistence of the rates of return analysis is only apparent. There are many practical problems (missing data and especially, the over-estimation of benefit rates as a consequence of excluding significant variables in the calculation). See Bennell (1996) for a critique on the use and abuse of rates of return.
See the article by Dagdeviren et al. (2002) for a mathematical model of the relationship between growth, equality and poverty. See also ECLAC’s simulations for Latin America (ECLAC, 2002, p. 49 et seq.).


An excellent critique of emergency social funds can be found in Cornia (2001).


In 2002, the Education for All – Fast Track Initiative (FTI) was launched as a global partnership between donor and developing countries to ensure accelerated progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of universal primary education by 2015.

The neoliberal theory was mainly formulated by Milton Friedman’s Chicago School. This theory motivated concrete policies of adjustment in many states. These policies included the radical break with the role of the state as the engine of economic growth, the reduction of controls and restrictions in the foreign trade, the adjustment of the exchange rates, the abolition of interventions in the domestic markets and the liberalisation of the financial markets.

Although there is an extensive debate with regards to the impacts of globalisation on inequality there are growing evidences that globalisation has led to dynamics of exclusion both at a national and international scale. See for example Wade and Wolf (2002).

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**FURTHER READINGS**


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111